

Clashing Voices

A study of gender and power dynamics in talk show interruptions

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Master's thesis

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April 2025

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Number of pages: 62 pages, 1 appendix

Abstract

This master's thesis examines the gender differences in power dynamics in the context of talk show interruptions. While gender and interruptions have been a topic of research across various fields and contexts for the last 50 years, there is very little research on interruptions during talk show interviews. The aim of this study is to analyze what role gender and power-related aspects, such as status, play in the interruption behaviors of men and women.

This study employs Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis by Lazar (2005), Conversation Analysis by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), the Participant-oriented Approach by Köktürk and Öztürk (2012), and the categories of intrusive and co-operative interruptions by Murata (1994) and Li (2001).

Six talk show hosts were chosen for this study, three of whom are men and three are women. They are Conan O'Brien, Larry King, and Jimmy Kimmel, as well as Ellen DeGeneres, Sherri Shepherd, and Kelly Clarkson. Two interviews were chosen from each talk show under special criteria, with one interviewee being a man and one a woman. The interviews were collected from the broadcasts' verified YouTube channels.

The study found that men interrupted 49 times, whereas women interrupted 40 times, with women more co-operatively. There was no notable difference in the occurrence of intrusive versus co-operative interruptions by men. Men were interrupted by their interlocutor slightly more often, with no notable difference between the genders of the interrupters, whereas women were interrupted slightly more by men than by other women.

The host interrupted 52 times, whereas the guest interrupted 37 times. Interviewers interrupted more co-operatively, whereas the guests interrupted more intrusively. Male hosts interrupted more than female hosts, and female guests interrupted more than male guests.

In conclusion, gender played some role in the occurrence and number of interruptions, but the differences tended to be quite small. Instead of gender, contextual role (i.e., host versus guest) as well as social hierarchies (e.g., personal relationships, age differences) played a more prominent role in interruptions.

Key words: critical discourse analysis, feminist critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, participant-oriented approach, gender differences, interruption.

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1 Introduction

Talk shows have been a staple of both radio and television entertainment for decades, captivating audiences with conversations, comedy, and societal topics for the past 90 years. Talk radio broadcasts became popular in the USA in the 1930s (Halper 2008), and the format was adapted to television from the late 1940s to the 1960s (Timberg, Erler & Newcomb 2002). A talk show can both be regarded as something fun and engaging, but it can also be regarded as something close to a news broadcast or a debate program, as a talk show's purpose is to both entertain the audience and distribute information concerning many topical issues in society and provide a platform to showcase one's ideas and opinions (Ilie 1999). A precursor to these talk broadcasts may have been the academies of 16th century Italy and the salons of 17th century France, both of which consisted of weekly discussions of political, societal, and cultural topics (Ilie 2006).

Be it late night comedy, lifestyle talk, or political discourse, talk shows serve as platforms for hosts and their guests to engage in a dialogue, often with a dynamic flow of conversation. With dynamic conversations, overlap is bound to happen. While overlapping is mostly brief and considered a natural part of conversation, there are instances where overlapping can be considered as intrusive and therefore violative of a speaker's rights (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). Overlapping and interruptions have been studied extensively across research fields for decades, approaching the phenomenon from various contexts, such as casual conversations (Zimmerman & West 1975), political (Beattie 1982) and medical interviews (Plug et al. 2022), parent-child dyads (West & Zimmerman 1977), radio interviews (Hutchby 1992), and fictional television shows (Zhao & Gantz 2003). Interestingly, while interest in interruption in talk shows has grown over the last decade (e.g., Tao 2018; Khan & Shahid 2019; Habibi, Hidayat & Alek 2020), very little research exists, especially in the Western world.

This mixed-method study employs feminist critical discourse analysis to comment on the societal attitudes towards the genders and gendered language within English-speaking contexts. The ways in which women communicate and how Western society talks about women has interested many feminist scholars over the years, and a feminist point of view has been applied to studying different phenomena (Lazar 2005). There is also not enough research on the conversational and linguistic aspects that differentiate talk shows from other "dialogic institutional discourse", that is, for example, medical or political interviews (Ilie 1999, 210). Talk shows are difficult to define in linguistic terms. The conversation is often casual, as any

everyday conversation is, but there are many situational and societal aspects that differentiate a talk show conversation from that between, say, two friends at a coffee shop. There is often a live audience that reacts to the conversation, and the interviewer usually leads the discussion. Talk shows also differ from each other, with some leaning heavily on entertainment and engaging with the audience, while others concern more serious topics with emphasis on providing information, and even different episodes of the same talk show may have very different characteristics. This is why it is difficult to pinpoint any one linguistic aspect that is definitive of talk shows in general (Ilie 1999). Thus, I motivate my study with the limited existing research on this specific context, as well as my personal interest in the behavioral differences between genders and the influence of social constructs in these differences.

One of the earliest and most influential research papers on this subject is that of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). This foundational study introduced the concept of *turn-taking* in conversations and outlined how speakers manage turns and how interruptions can disrupt the natural flow of conversation. Another key paper in the study of interruptions, specifically focusing on gender differences, is that of Zimmerman and West (1975). This study highlighted the role of interruptions in reflecting power dynamics, particularly gender-based differences showing how men tend to interrupt women more frequently in conversations, often reinforcing societal power structures. These papers set the groundwork for much of the later research on conversational interruption and gender differences and are discussed in more detail in chapter two. I also employ both Murata (1994) and Li's (2001) categorizations of *intrusive* and *co-operative* interruptions, which I discuss in more detail in chapter two. To briefly introduce the terminology, an intrusive interruption disrupts the flow of the conversation by violating a speaker's speaking rights and taking the speaking floor to oneself (Murata 1994). A co-operative interruption often signals agreement and engagement in the conversation, with the intention of keeping the conversation flowing (ibid.). A *successful* interruption – be it intrusive or co-operative – occurs when another speaker's speaking turn is cut off (Li 2001). An *unsuccessful* interruption occurs when a speaker intends to interject in the middle of another speaker's turn, but the speaker's turn does not get interrupted (ibid.).

While several studies since Zimmerman and West (1975) have established that there are clear linguistic differences between the genders (e.g., Kennedy & Camden 1983; Anderson & Leaper 1998), there are also numerous studies from the recent decades that either have found no notable differences between the genders (e.g., Zhao & Gantz 2003; Karakowsky, McBey & Miller 2004), or the findings have been contradictory (e.g., Youngquist 2009; Van Eecke &

Fernández 2016). Even though studies on language and gender differences date back decades, findings have been inconsistent from study to study, and not enough evidence exists to support any one hypothesis, despite findings such as Zimmerman and West (1975) being considered the general view. One should not consider interruption as a mere tool of dominance, as interruption can also be used to signal agreement and support of the conversation (Sapabsri et al. 2018). Itakura (2001) explains that imbalances (or asymmetries, as she calls them) in conversation are heavily influenced by social constructs and contexts, and several studies have indeed found that culture has an impact on how interruptions are perceived (e.g., Murata 1994, Itakura 2001).

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What role does gender play in the occurrence of intrusive versus co-operative interruptions between men and women?
2. What role does gender play in the occurrence and number of successful and unsuccessful interruptions?
3. What role does gender play in the number of interruptions instigated by the interviewer versus the interviewee?

Following these questions and based on previous research on interruptions, I propose several hypotheses. My first hypothesis is that men tend to interrupt more than women using intrusive interruptions, and that they interrupt women more than other men (e.g., Sapabsri et al. 2018). Women, on the other hand, use more co-operative interruptions, and they interrupt other women more. My second hypothesis is that women get interrupted successfully by both men and other women, whereas successful interruptions of men are lower in number regardless of the gender of the interrupter (e.g., James & Clarke 1993). My third hypothesis is that the person with contextually more societal power (i.e., the interviewer) interrupts their conversation partner more than vice versa, where gender may not play a prominent role (e.g., Beaumont 2009).

My thesis is constructed as follows: in chapter two, I discuss the theoretical background used in the study. I employ conversational analysis (CA) (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974), feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) (Lazar 2005), and analysis of intrusive and co-operative interruptions (Murata 1994; Li 2001). In chapter three, I introduce the materials and research methods of this thesis. In chapter four, I analyze the material and discuss the findings. In chapter five, I further discuss the findings of the study in regards to the theoretical background, and in chapter six, I compile my final thoughts.

2 Theoretical background

In this chapter, I introduce the frameworks that guide my study: in sections 2.1 to 2.3, I discuss Lazar's (2005) work on critical discourse analysis, Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson's (1974) model of conversation analysis, and Murata's (1994) exploration of overlapping talk and Li's (2001) continuation of it. Lazar's contribution to critical discourse analysis contributes a broader perspective by examining how power, ideology, and gender are embedded in language use. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) offer a detailed account of the turn-taking and sequential structures of conversation, and Köktürk and Öztürk (2012) offer a modified version of the framework. Murata (1994) focuses on the interactional and cultural dimensions of overlapping speech, whereas Li (2001) expands on the categorizations of interruption put forth by Murata (1994). In section 2.4, I discuss gendered language and how dominance is perceived in conversation, and in section 2.5, I introduce other influential studies conducted on gender dynamics and interruption.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

The language we use, both written and spoken, entails more messages and other connotations than just the literal meaning. In spoken language, we may use facial expressions, gestures, and different linguistic tools, such as intonation or tone, to convey our meaning in the conversation. Cultural values, power dynamics, and attitudes play a key role in any interaction between people. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims to reveal the "semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and political-economic or cultural change in society" (Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak 2011, 357). CDA sees discourse as a two-way event which shapes situations and social structures and is also shaped by them (ibid.). CDA has been widely used in areas like media studies, political discourse, education, gender studies, and organizational communication to explore topics such as representation of marginalized groups, political rhetoric and propaganda, gendered language and sexism, and media framing of social issues. These aspects are often subtle, and CDA aims to give them visibility.

2.1.1 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) integrates CDA with feminist theory, and seeks to investigate how gender, power and ideology are constructed, reinforced, and challenged through language in texts, media, and social interactions. FCDA emphasizes the ways in

which discourse contributes to the reproduction or contestation of gender inequalities and explores how language reflects, reinforces, or resists patriarchal norms.

As a subfield of CDA, FCDA examines what role discourse has in existing power structures by looking for patterns of language use (such as gendered language, which is discussed later) that may contribute to the power imbalances between genders. In line with CDA in general, FCDA views language as a form of social practice that both shapes and is shaped by societal structures and institutions; thus, language can be seen as a tool of power.

A key figure in FCDA is Michelle Lazar, who is credited with creating the term “Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis”. In her groundbreaking book (Lazar 2005), she explains that feminist subfields of different fields of study, especially in linguistics, seek to change the male-dominated views and conditions of these fields, and bring a critical perspective to these conditions. According to Lazar and Kramarae (2011), a common misconception is that feminist and gender studies are concerned mainly with women, despite gender studies offering a chance of critical thinking to anyone who is concerned with social and political issues in the society. Lazar (2005) notes that, while a growing number of men are accepting of FCDA, most feminist approaches in CDA are still usually undertaken by women. As she puts it, “the marriage of feminism with CDA, in sum, can produce a rich and powerful political critique for action” (Lazar 2005, 5).

2.2 Conversation Analysis (CA)

Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson published an article in 1974, where using recordings of naturally occurring conversations, they developed a model of *turn-taking* that is the basis of functional conversation. With turn-taking, people manage the flow of dialogue, allowing participants to both speak and listen in an organized way. According to CA, any conversation follows a set of rules, which define the ideal flow of conversation. According to these rules, ideally, one party talks at a time, overlaps are expected but brief, and *repair mechanisms* are used to fix turn violations, that is, interruptions (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, 700-701).

In a conversation, speaker change should occur, and usually also recur. Usually, one needs a conversation partner to have an actual conversation. For the conversation to flow effortlessly, the participants switch turns speaking, offering the floor to each other at appropriate times. For the conversation to proceed without problems, one party should talk at a time. Of course, overlapping is expected but should be brief in nature (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, 700). While overlap is common and expected in natural conversations, a

“functional” conversation should operate in a way that no speaker talks over the other. This can be difficult to maintain, especially in conversations with more than two parties, and therefore most overlap cannot be considered as disruptive.

In an ideal conversation, *turn-allocation* is used to choose the next speaker, either by the current speaker (e.g., addressing a certain participant, for example, “What do you think about that, Carol?”), or the other parties may self-select by starting to talk at an appropriate time. According to Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974, 704), “if the turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a ‘current speaker selects next’ technique, then the party so selected has the right and is obliged to take next turn to speak.” Other speakers are not “allowed” to self-select at this moment, and disrespecting this rule can be considered as a violation.

Ideally, in a conversation with two or more participants, the speakers notice the occurring overlap and intend to fix it by giving up their turn. Transitions from one speaker to the next are usually seamless and with minimal overlap, but according to the rules of turn-taking, the order and size of the turns vary (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, 701), which requires the participants to pay attention to the turn-taking process and may lead to overlapping speech. This is when *repair mechanisms* play an important role.

While several repair mechanisms can be used in conversations, a common mechanism is to stop speaking prematurely when more than one speaker begins talking at the same time. This is not necessarily an interruption but an error in turn-taking that can be fixed quickly. The same mechanism can be employed when one speaker tries to self-select in turn-taking, but the interlocutor is not finished speaking (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, 723-724).

It should be noted that the rules set by Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) are mainly guidelines for an ideal conversation, and several factors in a natural conversation can and will have an impact on it. Personality traits, gender, and power differences may all affect the flow of turn-taking as well as turn-gaining abilities, and these factors are encoded in conversational behavior (Ng, Brooke & Dunne 1995). Almoaily (2020, 188) argues that “male dominance in conversations is a matter of degree across different cultures.” Murata (1994) mentions that culture plays a role in not only the occurrence of interruptions, but also in their frequency as well as how they are perceived by the interlocutors.

The analysis by Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) is a key framework for this study, as I analyze my data and findings with the base rules in mind. The criteria for collecting my data are also based on the idea of an “ideal” conversation presented by Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974).

2.2.1 Participant-oriented Approach (Köktürk & Öztürk 2012)

Şaban Köktürk and Emine Öztürk (2012) introduce a revised version of the turn-taking model by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), incorporating participants' reactions and perceptions of simultaneous speech. They suggest that "effective communication may indeed also take place with sequences that differ from the standard model" (Köktürk & Öztürk 2012, 555). According to their argument, while overlapping speech is often categorized as an interruption that infringes on a speaker's rights, the true determinant of whether a violation has occurred is the interlocutor's response to the overlap. They dubbed this the *Participant-oriented Approach*, drawing on insights of other scholars who have observed the same phenomenon (e.g., Murata 1994; Coates 1996).

In their model, Köktürk and Öztürk (2012, 556) criticize the basic aspects of conversation analysis, arguing that the linguistic aspects that Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) claim to be the indicators of turn-allocation are merely signals of a possible turn-shift and not an absolute. They also argue (ibid.) that speakers cannot be certain when a speaking turn may change in the smoothest possible way and that transition relevant places (i.e., a point at the end of an utterance that may signal the end of a turn (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, 704)) do not necessarily occur after the linguistic signals.

Köktürk and Öztürk (2012) offer another way to identify disruptive speak, dubbing their approach the Participant-oriented Approach. The approach is based on the observation that interlocutors signal each other whether the disruption of speak is intrusive or "unproblematic". Thus, they encourage researchers to focus on not only the linguistic aspects of conversations, but also the reactions of the speakers. This way it is easier to avoid classifying an interruption as disruptive or "problematic", when in reality the other speaker does not perceive it as such.

The Participant-oriented Approach is worth mentioning, because as Köktürk and Öztürk (2012, 555) argue, the perception of interruptions and overlapping depend on the style of conversation, the social context (that is, for example, whether the context of the conversation is casual or formal), and the culture and customs of the community. In short, many social factors shape our perspective of each conversation. I employ this approach in my study by taking into account how the interlocutors behave during observable interruptions. This is because analyzing interruptions is, while possible, quite difficult based merely on Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), because as mentioned earlier, their rules of turn-

taking represent an ideal conversation and do not consider the possible affecting factors mentioned by Köktürk and Öztürk (2012).

2.3 Intrusive and co-operative interruption

A simple distinction between overlap and interruption is that overlap occurs at a transition relevant place and with an immediate resolve, whereas interruption often leads to a change of topic and possible competition for the turn (Murata 1994). Interruption can take place with or without overlapping. A basic example of interruption with overlap is simply talking over another speaker, whereas interruption without overlap can occur when there is a break (i.e., silence) in a speaker's speech and another speaker self-selects a turn, but the current speaker is not finished with their turn.

Murata (1994) distinguishes two types of interruption: *co-operative interruption* (CI), and *intrusive interruption* (II). CI occurs when an interlocutor "joins the speaker's utterance by supplying a word or a phrase for which the speaker is searching, or even completes it for him/her" (Murata 1994, 387). The interrupter does not seek to disturb the flow of conversation or violate the other speaker's rights. The intention and effect of interrupting are not mutually exclusive, and thus some cultures and individuals may still view CI as intrusive and violative of one's speaking rights, despite the intention not being so. This is very common in western cultures, where individuality and one's personal position in society are highlighted. In more collective cultures, where the individual's contribution to society and the common good is highlighted, CI can be seen as a sign of the interlocutors' positive attitude and support of the conversation (Murata 1994).

II usually occurs when the interlocutor seeks to change topic or turn, or to disagree, which Murata (1994, 388-390) further categorizes as *topic-changing* (TCI), *floor-taking* (FTI), and *disagreement interruptions* (DI). TCI occurs when the interrupter interrupts the other speaker with the intention to change the topic completely. FTI is similar to TCI, but the aim is not necessarily to change the topic, but to claim the speaking turn regardless of whether the other speaker is finished or not. However, FTI could be interpreted as the interrupter's intention to partake in the ongoing conversation (ibid.). Similarly, DI does not necessarily aim to change the topic completely, but to show disagreement with the other speaker and thus reinforce the interrupter's position (ibid.). A common example of DI occurring is during arguments, where intrusive interruption can occur quite easily.

As mentioned earlier, whether interruptions are considered as co-operative or intrusive is dependent on cultural factors as well as how the listener themselves perceives the

interruption. More collective cultures may even encourage interruption, as it is seen as the interrupter's involvement in the conversation (Murata 1994). More individual or "territorial" cultures may see interruptions as inappropriate and violative regardless of whether the interruption is intrusive or co-operative (ibid.).

Following Murata's (1994) study on interruptions between Japanese and English speakers, Li (2001) conducted a similar study, examining Canadian English-speakers and Chinese Mandarin-speakers in 42 same-sex dyads, where the participants role-played patient-doctor discussions. Li divided Murata's (1994) co-operative interruption into three subcategories: *agreement*, *assistance*, and *clarification*. Li also borrowed *tangentialization* from Kennedy and Camden (1983). Tangentialization is defined as "speech which (1) reflects the awareness of the first speaker's statement, and (2) in some way minimizes or makes light of the first speaker's message" (Kennedy & Camden 1983, 51). Thus, it somewhat resembles floor-taking interruption, as the second speaker may use the first speaker's statement to talk about something else that may be related to the first speaker's statement. Thus, tangentialization can be difficult to classify, as it could be intended as co-operative, but can function in extremely intrusive ways. Since both Kennedy and Camden (1983) as well as Li (2001) included tangentialization in the intrusive category, I have also included it there.

Li (2001) found that Canadian-Canadian dyads reported more intrusive interruptions than co-operative ones, although the difference was not notable. Chinese-Chinese dyads reported more co-operative interruptions than intrusive ones. In Canadian-Chinese dyads, intrusive interruptions were reported more when the speaker was Canadian and the listener Chinese. When the speaker was Chinese and the listener Canadian, the number of reported intrusive and co-operative interruptions were similar. Li (2001) also found that the "doctors" instigated more intrusive interruptions, whereas the "patients" instigated more co-operative interruptions. However, Chinese "doctors" and their "patients" engaged in similar numbers of both intrusive and co-operative interruptions, whereas Canadian "doctors" instigated only intrusive interruptions. These findings support Murata's (1994) argument of the role of culture in the emergence as well as perception of interruptions.

Considering Murata (1994) and Li's (2001) findings, it is possible to hypothesize that, as I study US citizens (note that not all of them were born in the USA but all of them hold a citizenship) in American talk shows, a notable number of possible interruptions found in my study may be intrusive instead of co-operative.

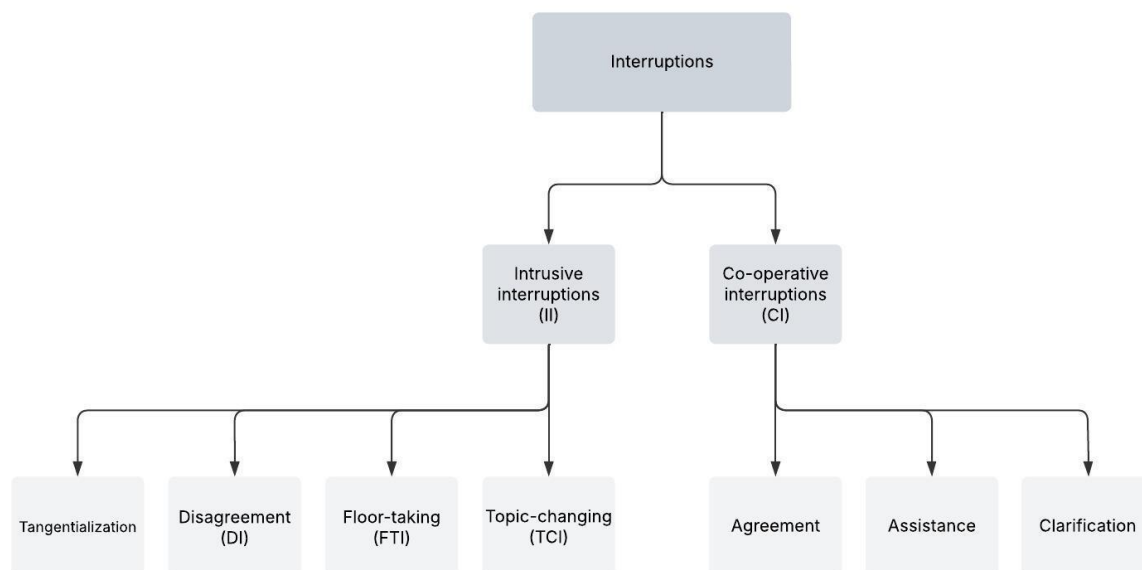


Figure 1 Categorizations of interruptions (adapted from Murata (1994) and Li (2001))

Next, I discuss how the theoretical framework and especially the concept of intrusive and co-operative interruptions tie into previous research of language use between the genders.

Researchers who have studied gender differences in language use have not necessarily studied these phenomena from the point of view of intrusive and co-operative interruptions, but introducing said phenomena may well help understand how gender differences in language use can affect interruptions in conversation.

2.4 Language, gender, and power

Gendered language can be defined in two ways. On the one hand, gendered language can mean the language that is used by society to describe and define the people of those genders (usually women), such as gendered pronouns or job titles (e.g., actor versus actress).

Masculine generic forms entail the belief that a prototypic person is considered male, a grammatical norm that exists in other languages besides English (Weatherall 2002). On the other hand, gendered language can mean language that is used by different genders. Men have been found to use more *assertive* language (i.e., more dominant and confident), whereas women have been found to use more *affiliative* language (i.e., more agreeable and connected) (Leaper & Ayres 2007). In short, words and syntax, as well as semantics and attitudes, manifest differently between the genders (Hancock & Rubin 2014). However, the meaning of words may depend on who is speaking and who is being referred to, and thus “sexist” language may, in fact, not always be sexist (Weatherall 2002).

The differences in linguistic and other social behavior between genders are shaped by several factors, such as socialization, gender stereotypes, social expectations, and even physical appearance (Eagly 1987). Thus, gender differences in conversational imbalances may be the consequence of existing social structures (Itakura 2001), such as children being exposed more to male characters and gender stereotypes in stories and in toys (Weatherall 2002).

Men often enjoy a higher status in the society than women, and therefore interruptions instigated by women may be reported more easily, as interruptions by lower-status individuals may be perceived as rude (Eagly & Wood 1982). The perception that an interruptive person is seen as more dominant (Beaumont 2009) is linked to the stereotype of women being less competent, and to the idea that women and men displaying the same behavior are judged differently (Youngquist 2009). Thus, men's interruptive behavior may be less noticeable than that of women.

Women can experience "linguistic discrimination" in how they use language as well as in how language is used to talk about them. Thus, "women's language" is the result of men assigning to women things that do not concern their masculinity or ego, such as discriminating between shades of colors (Lakoff 1975, 46). There is a common belief that while men see colors, women see shades. This belief is also a good example of gendered language, as very stereotypically it could be said that a man would not know what "mauve" or "cerulean" is, but a woman would. As women have traditionally not been expected to concern themselves with important decision making, such as a career or even education, their concerns have regarded "irrelevant" topics, such as the differentiation of shades, thus demonstrating masculine dominance and feminine submission (Hancock & Rubin 2014). This is a classic example of how society sees women and thus targets "mundane" topics towards them, whereas men's language manifests as more direct and assertive behavior, such as *mansplaining*, which is often directed at the "less competent" conversation partner. Mansplaining can include interruptions to condescend and assert dominance over the other speaker, usually a woman (Bridges 2017).

Many studies have focused on gender differences in verbal communication, and traditionally it has been believed that women's language is more submissive than men's. Women who exhibit "masculine" language and behavior are often considered aggressive or even disrespectful (LaFrance 1992). Women's language is believed to be characterized by tag questions, hedges, politeness, hesitation, and the allowance of interruptions (Hancock & Rubin 2014), whereas men's language is believed to be characterized by assertiveness,

aggressiveness, precision, and instrumentality (Leaper & Ayres 2007). Similar gender differences have been found in children's language (Leaper & Smith 2004). Studies have also found that women use more *backchanneling* than men (i.e., verbal or nonverbal interjections such as *uh huh* or *yeah* that cannot be categorized as interruptions) (e.g., Maltz & Borker 1982; Hannah & Murachver 2007). Maltz and Borker (1982) argue that this is due to women signaling attentiveness, whereas men's use of backchanneling usually signals agreement. However, Fishman (1978) claims that men's use of backchanneling may be a sign of lack of interest and laziness to contribute to the conversation.

Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz (1985) argue that gender imparities in language are the result of the power imbalance between men and women. Men and high-status individuals have been found to show similar patterns of behavior in interaction (Aries 1996). Interruption or otherwise obtrusive language can be used as a tool of power and can be a sign of "disregard toward the rules and etiquette of polite exchange" (Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz 1985, 35), that is, the model of conversation analysis proposed by Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974).

2.5 Previous research on interruption

In this section, I introduce the study by Zimmerman and West (1975), which is often considered as the foundation of studies regarding gender differences in interruption. While interruption had already been studied before Zimmerman and West, their findings were quite prominent and thus created the framework on what is "expected" to be found in interruption studies. I also introduce several studies from later decades that have unearthed otherwise interesting findings to see how research on gender differences in interruptions has developed over the years.

2.5.1 Zimmerman & West (1975)

Don H. Zimmerman and Candace West (1975) conducted a study where they recorded everyday conversations between university students. They examined 10 male-male dyads, 10 female-female dyads, and 11 male-female dyads. In the same-sex dyads, most instances of simultaneous speech were classified as overlap instead of interruptions. Especially the conversations between women were found to be more co-operative and there were fewer interruptions in general. When interruptions occurred, no one interlocutor interrupted the other more.

In cross-sex dyads, however, interruptions occurred much more, and out of 48 interruptions, 46 were instigated by men. These conversational behaviors between the genders mirror societal power structures, with men having more power and occupying more dominant positions in society, thus also dominating the conversation (Youngquist 2009). Since then, several studies have found supporting results (e.g., James & Clarke 1993; Anderson & Leaper 1998). Due to this, the tendency of men to interrupt more and the interruptions being directed at women have been established as the general view.

However, as findings have not been consistent over the decades, no one hypothesis can be considered as the correct one. Several contextual aspects affect the flow of conversation and turn-taking, be it culture, power imbalance, or just friends having a good time. That is why several scholars have been interested in how language influences and is influenced by power dynamics between people, which I discuss next.

2.5.2 Studying language and power dynamics

Interruption is often seen as a tool of power and dominance. The speaker can use interruptions to either consciously or unconsciously dominate the interlocutor (Kennedy & Camden 1983). Interruptions can be seen as a tool to not only dominate the interaction, but also to control the topic and direction of the conversation. If one is prone to interrupting, they may be considered dominant by other people (Beaumont 2009). As mentioned earlier, prior research has suggested that men tend to interrupt more than women, and that the interruptions occur mostly in cross-sex conversations (Zimmerman & West 1975). James and Clarke (1993) also found that men's tendency to interrupt more occurred slightly more in group conversations than in dyadic conversations. This mirrors the societal power imbalance between men and women, as gendered language manifests itself according to the societal positions of the genders, that is, the generally higher position of men and the lower position of women.

Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1985) studied the interpersonal interactions in both same-sex and cross-sex relationships. They found that in couples where one partner dominated in power, the dominant partner tended to interrupt the weaker partner more. This was true for both dominant men and women. However, less than half of the interruptions were successful. They also found that male couples produced less successful interruptions and overlap in general than female or cross-sex couples. Still, it had more to do with power balance/imbalance than gender. Thus, the findings of the study do not support the general notion that interruption is linked to gender. However, as men tend to often have more societal

power than women, gender may be somewhat linked to interruptive behavior but is not necessarily the cause.

In their study, Octigan and Niederman (1979) found that in cross-sex dyads, 68 percent of overlap and interruptions were instigated by men, and that men expressed 56 to 100 percent of otherwise dominant behavior. They also found that same-sex dyads – both male-male and female-female – instigated much less interruptions than cross-sex dyads, which mirrors the findings of Zimmerman and West (1975). Interestingly however, Octigan and Niederman (1979) found that participants in female-female dyads expressed more dominant behavior than those in male-male dyads, something that was also found decades later by Youngquist (2009) and Van Eecke and Fernández (2016).

Youngquist (2009) investigated university students listening to prerecorded dyadic conversations. The participants then had to answer a questionnaire about perceived interpersonal dominance between the actors in the recordings. He discovered that female interrupters were perceived as more dominant than male interrupters in mixed-sex dyads. This was also true for female-female dyads, but interestingly, the perceptions were not as high in male-male dyads. Thus, a female interrupter was perceived as dominant regardless of the gender of the conversation partner. Van Eecke and Fernández (2016), on the other hand, investigated a corpus of transcriptions of cross-sex conversations. They analyzed the occurrence of both overlap and interruptions and found that while most interruptions were often instigated by men, women tended to mostly interrupt other women.

Hancock and Rubin (2014) examined 20 men and 20 women between the ages 18 and 59, most of whom were young adults, having conversations with both male and female conversation partners. They studied the use of linguistic tools based on the gender of the conversational partner, such as personal pronouns, tag questions, self-references, as well as interruptions. They recorded 3-minute conversations and analyzed the previously mentioned use of linguistic tools found in these recordings. The findings did not support the idea of “gendered language”, as the use of linguistic tools did not change depending on the gender of the conversation partner. Hancock and Rubin (2014) suggest that the participants’ young age may be an affecting factor, supporting Leaper and Ayres’s (2007) argument that young adults use similar language regardless of gender.

Almoaily (2020) studied how age and gender affect the frequency of interruptions in mixed-sex conversations. He studied the recorded interviews between 80 Saudi Arabian women and their friends and relatives. The people interviewed were men and women of the same age as the interviewers as well as men and women who were older than the interviewers.

He found that women interrupted the interviewers more often than men, and that age did not have much impact on the frequency of interruptions.

James and Clarke (1993) conducted a large meta-analysis of studies of interruption conducted between the years 1965 and 1991. Most studies found no notable differences between genders, which is an interesting finding, since it has been claimed time and again that men tend to interrupt more than women. James and Clarke suggest that interruptive behavior may be more tied to dominance than gender alone, and that – based on previous findings such as Kennedy and Camden (1983) – most interruptions in casual conversations may not even be dominance-related, but co-operative and supportive signs of engagement.

As can be seen in these examples, interruptive behavior is strongly related to dominance, which is not necessarily linked to gender. As was found in many of the studies, dominant people in general tend to interrupt more, and a dominant position in society also contributes to interruptive behavior. However, as mentioned before, as men tend to still hold these dominant positions more than women, they may engage more in assertive and dominant behavior and thus interrupt more, or rather their dominant behavior may be more expected than that of women's (LaFrance 1992; Youngquist 2009).

3 Materials and methods

The exact starting point of modern television talk shows in the USA is somewhat controversial, with different sources naming different people as the first host, different programs as the first talk show, and different years as the first year a show aired, but talk shows started to air nationwide at the turning point of the 1950s and 1960s, having existed as radio talk programs ever since the late 1920s (Halper 2008). Ilie (2006) names Phil Donahue as the first talk show host, despite Joe Franklin being often regarded as the first one, as his talk show aired from 1950 to 1993, whereas Donahue's show *The Phil Donahue Show* aired from 1967 to 1993. However, Donahue is regarded as the pioneer of modern talk shows, as the format started getting more popular with his show rather than Franklin's (Timberg, Erler & Newcomb 2002). *The Tonight Show* is the longest-running talk show in general, as it first aired in 1954, with Steve Allen as its first host, and continues today, with Jimmy Fallon as the current host. The 1980s saw the rise of many famous talk shows and their hosts, such as David Letterman, Oprah Winfrey, and Larry King. Some of these talk shows are still airing today, while others have ended since then or reappeared as new and improved formats.

In this study, I examine several different talk show interviews and the occurrence of interruptions between the hosts and their guests. Using the framework put forth by Murata (1994) and Li (2001), I analyze the interruptions and the role that gender and power dynamics may play. It should be noted that all my data comes from American talk shows, and thus I will not take culture into account. In this chapter, I explain the material that I have collected for the study as well as the criteria that I used to filter through the material. I will discuss these next.

3.1 Collected material

The material collected for this study consists of 12 full-length interviews from six talk shows, each collected from YouTube. Three of these talk shows are hosted by men and three by women, with each talk show host interviewing one man and one woman; thus, six of the interviewees were male and six were female. The talk shows chosen are *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *Sherri*, *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, *Larry King Now*, *Conan*, and *Jimmy Kimmel Live*. Therefore, the hosts studied are Ellen DeGeneres, Sherri Shepherd, Kelly Clarkson, Larry King, Conan O'Brien, and Jimmy Kimmel. The interviews were chosen under five criteria, which are discussed in more detail below. The people being interviewed were chosen randomly, as I paid attention only to whether the interviews met the criteria or not. Finding

interviews with the exact same people in different talk shows, while possible, was extremely difficult under the criteria. The chosen talk shows, their distributor networks, studied hosts, their guests, and the duration of the interviews and their original time of airing are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1 Studied talk show hosts and their guests

Talk show (Network)	Host	Guest 1 (duration) (first aired)	Guest 2 (duration) (first aired)
<i>The Ellen DeGeneres Show</i> (NBC)	Ellen DeGeneres	Cher (13:09) (Sep 7, 2016)	Leonardo DiCaprio (11:40) (Jan 7, 2014)
<i>Sherri</i> (Debmarmercury)	Sherri Shepherd	Whoopi Goldberg (15:21) (May 15, 2024)	Lenny Kravitz (15:00) (Mar 21, 2024)
<i>The Kelly Clarkson Show</i> (NBCUniversal Syndication Studios)	Kelly Clarkson	Zendaya (16:35) (Apr 26, 2024)	Terry Crews (10:29) (Jul 23, 2024)
<i>Larry King Now</i> (Ora TV)	Larry King	Sharon Osbourne (13:09) (Apr 9, 2018)	Corey Taylor (17:51) (Sep 16, 2017)
<i>Conan</i> (TBS)	Conan O'Brien	Mila Kunis (17:45) (Jun 18, 2021)	Seth Rogen (19:23) (Jun 23, 2021)
<i>Jimmy Kimmel Live!</i> (ABC)	Jimmy Kimmel	Michelle Obama (14:00) (Nov 16, 2018)	Harrison Ford (11:23) (Oct 9, 2024)

3.1.1 Criteria for collecting the material

To be chosen for this study, the interviews had to meet five criteria. I created these criteria to set an equal base for the comparison of the interviews, as several outside factors might possibly influence the number of interruptions and other overlaps in the discourse.

First, the interviewee had to be a celebrity. Most of the interviewees are singers or actors, but some of them are media personalities as well. I excluded talk shows and interviews with non-celebrities, such as *Dr. Phil* or *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, because the power imbalance between the interviewer and the interviewee would be more prominent than between two celebrities, thus possibly affecting the number of interruptions.

Second, the interview had to be conducted one on one. I excluded shows such as *The Graham Norton Show* or *The View*, where multiple people are present during the interview,

which naturally creates more overlap and confusion in turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). I also excluded talk shows that utilize side activities in their interviews, such as *Hot Ones*, as that may also influence the occurrence of overlaps and interruptions.

Third, as I chose two interviews from each talk show, both interviews had to have aired on the same show, to keep my material as consistent and up to date as possible, especially since I am studying different people. So, for example, since I am studying *Larry King Now*, I did not consider interviews from *Larry King Live* that may have aired some 30 years ago, when cultural and societal aspects may have had a different impact on the flow of conversation than they do today.

Fourth, each interview had to last at least 10 minutes and not longer than 25 minutes. This way I have as much data as possible without the workload stretching too much, while the similar-length interviews give me as equal amount of data as possible. Many talk shows – especially late-night shows – include multiple segments in a short airtime, and hence the segments are often brief. This includes interviews, which often last approximately five minutes and might contain some side activities, which do not fit my criteria.

Fifth, the interviews had to be uploaded to the verified YouTube channels of the networks on which they have aired to avoid any copyright issues and to verify that the interviews are authentic and have correct information in them. In most cases, the channels are those of the shows themselves, run by the networks that produce them. The interviews from *Conan* were uploaded to the channel of Team Coco, which is owned by Conan O'Brien.

3.1.2 Analyzing the data with dimensions of interruption

To analyze the material collected, I follow the framework introduced by Murata (1994). That is, I determine whether the interruptions recorded can be classified as intrusive (II) or co-operative (CI). I also follow Li's (2001) dimensions of interruptions that she used in her study. She divided interruptions into *successful*, *unsuccessful*, *those without overlapping* (also termed "*silent interruptions*" by Ferguson (1977)), and *complex interruptions*.

An interruption is *successful* if "the second speaker cuts off the first speaker before he or she finishes a complete utterance (more than the last word of the utterance)" and "the second speaker continues to talk until he or she finishes an utterance, whereas the first speaker stops talking abruptly" (Li 2001, 268). That is, if another speaker begins talking when the first speaker is at the end of their sentence but does not get cut off, it may be considered as overlap rather than an interruption. On the contrary, interruption is *unsuccessful* when the second speaker starts talking before the first speaker finishes their turn, but both speakers continue

talking or the second speaker stops abruptly (*ibid.*). That is, the first speaker's turn does not get interrupted. Almoaily (2020, 188) summarizes the difference between overlapping and interruption by stating that during an interruption, a speaker's speaking rights are violated, but during overlapping, the speaker keeps their rights.

Interruption can also occur with or without overlapping (Murata 1994). For efficiency, I use Ferguson's (1977) term "silent interruption" instead of "interruption without overlapping." A silent interruption occurs when the second speaker starts talking despite the first speaker not being done with their turn, but the utterances do not overlap. An example of such a situation is when a speaker stops talking for whatever reason and the other speaker interprets the silence as an end of turn, thus beginning their own turn.

Finally, complex interruptions are not necessarily just about cutting off the other speaker, but they involve a shift in the conversation's focus or structure, where the speaker offers new information or a new viewpoint (Ferguson 1977; Kennedy & Camden 1983). They are similar to TCI or FTI but cannot be as clearly categorized. Whatever interruptions I have deemed difficult to categorize, I have categorized as complex interruptions.

I divide the interruptions into successful, unsuccessful, and silent interruptions. I further divide those interruptions into intrusive and co-operative interruptions, which again I divide into TCI, FTI, DI, or tangentialization, or agreement, assistance, or clarification. I have omitted complex interruptions from my analysis, as due to the difficulty of categorizing them, they do not provide meaningful insight to the analysis. For the same reason, I have also omitted silent interruptions. To provide examples, moments in the interviews that include a clear interruption or an interruption attempt, be it intrusive or co-operative, have been transcribed into text using a semi-verbatim format of the Jeffersonian transcription (Jefferson 1989; see table 2 below for the transcription symbols used in this study). This means that actions such as backchanneling, premature stops, and false starts have been recorded in the transcription, but features such as intonation, tone, or speed have been omitted, as their presence does not contribute to my analysis.

I should mention that while the focus of this study is on verbal communication, I also occasionally discuss nonverbal behavior in the analysis, as according to CDA, nonverbal messages are a key part of communication just as verbal messages are. Many unsuccessful interruptions recorded also contain clear nonverbal behavior (such as inhales or hand gestures) and I have decided to mention them for clarifying unsuccessful interruptions that are discussed, as only interruptions that succeed are transcribed.

Table 2 Extract of Jeffersonian transcription symbols

Symbol	Definition
[you know] [yeah]	Overlapping talk, backchanneling
=you know	No discernible pause
you know (.)	Brief pause, not necessarily at the end of turn
you know-	A cut-off, a glottal stop
you know,	Continuation, the speaker has not finished
you know.	Full stop, not necessarily followed by a pause

3.1.3 Ethical considerations

There are some caveats when gathering data from social media. Videos uploaded on the platform are often copyrighted and using them for research purposes may violate intellectual property laws unless permissions are obtained, or the use qualifies under the fair use policies (Tekijänoikeuslaki 1961/404 § 14; Copyright Act of 1976). On YouTube, people may avoid copyright issues by editing small features of the videos as to not upload the copyrighted version but “one of their own”, even if the edits are minimal. To avoid copyright issues, the videos that I chose for my study are publicly available and are uploaded to the verified channels of the networks that have produced them.

The research conducted must not cause harm to the individuals that are being researched, even if they are public figures (Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta 2019). This is ensured by understanding that the people in the study were chosen randomly, and that my findings do not represent any group of people as a whole or accuse any person of certain behavior. I have chosen the material under the criteria that I created with no intention of targeting any certain celebrities or claiming any type of behavior to be characteristic of them. The research should also be conducted with consideration of whether it is ethical to use publicly available content without informing the subjects about it, even if they are public figures. For this reason, I avoided using interviews with non-celebrities, as public figures have fewer privacy protections than non-public people and have usually consented to the televised interviews by showing up and participating in the interview (Ristimella 2018).

4 Analysis and findings

The table below presents the quantitative data of the interruptions that occur in the material. I divide the occurrence and number of the subcategories of intrusive and co-operative interruptions between genders (male-male, male-female, female-male, and female-female) and between participants (host-guest and guest-host). Complex and silent interruptions were too scarce in number to provide meaningful content into the analysis, and thus they have been omitted from the table.

Table 3 Quantitative data of interruptions by gender

Interruption category		Male-male (MM)	Male-female (MF)	Female-male (FM)	Female-female (FF)	Total (%)
Intrusive	Floor-taking	7	2	8	4	21 (23.6)
	Topic-changing	2	4	0	2	8 (9.0)
	Disagreement	0	2	1	0	3 (3.4)
	Tangentialization	6	1	2	1	10 (11.2)
Co-operative	Agreement	3	3	6	3	15 (16.9)
	Assistance	1	5	1	3	10 (11.2)
	Clarification	5	8	4	5	22 (24.7)
Total (%)		24 (27.0)	25 (28.1)	22 (24.7)	18 (20.2)	89 (100.0)

Table 4 Quantitative data of interruptions by role

Interruption category		Host-guest	Guest-host
Intrusive	Floor-taking	7	14
	Topic-changing	7	1
	Disagreement	3	0
	Tangentialization	4	6
Co-operative	Agreement	5	10
	Assistance	8	2
	Clarification	18	4
Total (%)		52 (58.4)	37 (41.6)

Table 3 shows the data of interruptions classified by gender. I categorized the interruptions depending on whether they were conducted in mixed-sex (female to male or male to female) or same-sex dyads (male to male or female to female). I also divided the categorizations into intrusive and co-operative interruptions using Murata's (1994)

classifications, and those I divided further into subcategories following Li's (2001) classifications, both of which were discussed earlier.

Table 4 shows the data on interruptions based on the contextual role of the participants (i.e., host and guest). I divided the interruptions depending on whether they were conducted host to guest or guest to host (i.e., whether the host or guest interrupted). Once again, I divided the interruptions into intrusive and co-operative interruptions and further divided them into their respective subcategories.

Next, in sections 4.1 to 4.6, I analyze each studied talk show and their participants in more depth, introducing examples of different interruptions, which I have transcribed using the Jeffersonian transcription method (Jefferson 1989). I employ conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974) and the Participant-oriented Approach (Köktürk & Özkürk 2012) as well as the categories of intrusive and co-operative interruptions (Murata 1994; Li 2001) while I analyze my findings.

4.1 The Ellen DeGeneres Show

The Ellen DeGeneres Show was a daytime talk show both created and hosted by Ellen DeGeneres. She is regarded as one of the most prominent talk show hosts in history, having won numerous awards and other accolades over the years and having hosted *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* for 19 years between 2003 and 2022. The show can be considered as a typical talk show, as it often included – along with the interviews – musical guests, activities such as pranks or games, and comedy.

Despite being one of the most successful talk show hosts in the USA, DeGeneres has gained controversy over the years for being mean and rude to her guests, often even embarrassing them during the interviews. Over the years, several celebrities such as Nikkie de Jager, Cathy Griffin, and Dakota Johnson have called out DeGeneres' behavior both in later interviews and in the show itself (Tenbarge 2020). DeGeneres and her team have also been accused of creating a “toxic work environment” (Savage 2020).

4.1.1 Cher (FF)

In the interview with singer and actress Cher, DeGeneres interrupts her four times successfully and instigates one interruption attempt (i.e., unsuccessful interruption). She also provides inserts that overlap with Cher's speech but cannot be considered as interruptions.

01 DeGeneres I mean, that's really fun, like =you wanna do another movie
 02 with her?
 03 Cher I'd love to.
 04 DeGeneres Do you have any ideas?
 05 Cher No.
 06 DeGeneres Okay.
 07 Cher You wanna come up with any?
 08 DeGeneres Yes.
 09 Cher Oka[y.]
 10 DeGeneres [I'll] =I'll come up with an idea and then-
 11 Cher Actually, you
 12 know we saved a girl's life once, the two of us.

Example 2 Tangentialization interruption by Cher

In example 2, Cher and DeGeneres discuss the movie *Mamma Mia: Here We Go Again!* and whether Cher would like to star alongside fellow actress Meryl Streep again. Once again, Cher gives very short answers, to which DeGeneres answers with equally short statements, such as “okay” or “yes”. There is next to no overlap save for the end, where DeGeneres slightly overlaps with Cher’s answer and then gets cut off by Cher. Cher’s interruption is clearly an intrusive one, categorized as a tangentialization, as while she is still talking about Meryl Streep, she takes the floor to herself to talk about an event that occurred to her and Streep in the past, despite her and DeGeneres discussing movies.

All of DeGeneres’ interruptions are co-operative clarifications, but as can be seen in the examples, she often just interrupts Cher to ask a follow-up question, thus behaving intrusively despite not necessarily intending so. Cher’s interruptions are mainly intrusive, usually tangentializations or FTIs, with one co-operative agreement and a possible assistance interruption (see example 3 below). These findings somewhat support the previous findings that women tend to interrupt each other, but it cannot be established as an absolute, because on one hand Cher does not backchannel much and gives short answers, but on the other hand she may throw in a comment in the middle of DeGeneres’ speech or completely cut her off to talk about something else that may or may not be related to the topic at hand.

01 DeGeneres Obviously there are a lot of people who =would =disagree
 02 with us, but I- I- (.) completely (.) [understand-]
 03 Cher [Disagree with] them.

Example 3 Assistance interruption by Cher

4.1.2 Leonardo DiCaprio (FM)

During the interview with actor Leonardo DiCaprio, DeGeneres successfully interrupts him three times. The interruptions are mostly follow-up questions to DiCaprio’s answers that she throws in in the middle of DiCaprio’s speech. Two of DeGeneres’ interruptions can be

categorized as clarifications and one as agreement. Otherwise, she mainly backchannels, which does not interrupt DiCaprio's speech. There is also some overlap on both ends, where one speaker begins to ask a question or comment on something while the other is still speaking, without cutting their speaking turn short.

01 DiCaprio I did a whole excursion where I went to Nepal, went on
 02 an elephant's back and looked for tigers of course (.)
 03 for four days I was there I didn't see a single tiger,
 04 they =blend into the jungle and you have- and the
 05 elephants sort of (.) go up on their hind legs and =they
 06 react to a tiger being there but you can't actually see
 07 them (.) and I went to uh-
 08 DeGeneres Wait what happens when you're
 09 on an elephant and it goes on its (.) [hind legs?]
 10 DiCaprio [You hold on.]
 11 DeGeneres Okay.
 12 DiCaprio You hold [on for your] life.
 13 DeGeneres [I see.]

Example 4 Clarification interruption by DeGeneres

In example 4, DiCaprio discusses visiting Nepal as a part of his philanthropy work in protecting animals. He intends to continue his story, but DeGeneres cuts his sentence off by asking a clarifying question about elephants. While the interruption is indeed quite intrusive, it could be categorized as co-operative clarification, as DeGeneres lets DiCaprio continue his story after asking the question. There is also some overlap, but it is not interruptive, as both parties continue speaking despite the overlap. These could be classified as turn-taking errors, where the order of turns is not clear to the participants, and they speak over each other. However, the turns are quite short, so they do not seem to violate either party's speaking rights.

DiCaprio instigates three successful interruptions with no apparent attempts. They are co-operative and can be categorized as agreement and assistance interruptions, as while they do cut off DeGeneres momentarily, they signal DiCaprio's engagement in the conversation, as he also lets DeGeneres finish asking her questions. Quite often, there is a pause between DeGeneres' and DiCaprio's turns, which signals an orderly alteration in speaking turns. In example 5, DeGeneres asks about DiCaprio's break in acting after filming the movies *Django Unchained*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *The Wolf of Wall Street* back-to-back. DiCaprio waits for his turn to answer DeGeneres, but cuts her next speaking turn off. However, this could be an error in turn-taking rather than an FTI, because throughout the interview, DiCaprio does not otherwise take the floor from DeGeneres. However, because DeGeneres does get cut off but

DiCaprio's intention does not seem to be intrusive, I categorize this as a co-operative agreement.

01 DeGeneres And you forget about Django Unchained and Gatsby and, uh (.)
 02 so- (.) when you- how long have you been off now?
 03 DiCaprio It's been about a year and I still don't have- I mean this
 04 was such a- this film =took really everything out of me.
 05 DeGeneres But you're good at relaxing and doing-
 06 DiCaprio Oh I'm great.
 07 DeGeneres Yeah.

Example 5 Agreement interruption by DiCaprio

The findings from DeGeneres and DiCaprio's interview clash with the consensus that men interrupt more than women. DiCaprio seems to be an active listener and lets DeGeneres finish her questions before answering them, and the changes in speaking turns are very clear with minimal overlap, apart from the examples discussed above. Overlap that occurs during the interview is brief and non-intrusive, and whenever an interruption occurs, it is mostly co-operative, and the interlocutor does not signal his or her speaking rights being violated.

4.2 Sherri

Sherri is a recent daytime talk show created and hosted by actress and comedian Sherri Shepherd, having first aired in 2022, thus being the "youngest" talk show in this study. Previously, Shepherd was a co-host on *The View*, where several hosts interviewed their guests together. On *Sherri*, Shepherd interviews her guests alone. Sometimes the interviews contain side activities, but the core interviews are done one on one. Before *Sherri*, Shepherd also hosted *The Wendy Williams Show*. Over its fairly short history, the show has won and been nominated for several different accolades. While Shepherd is a generally liked host, she has created controversy with her ignorant behavior during interviews in the past (Bond 2014; Carpenter 2023).

4.2.1 Whoopi Goldberg (FF)

The interview with EGOT-winning actor and comedian Whoopi Goldberg has a personal atmosphere to it, because not only was Goldberg Shepherd's co-host on *The View* between 2007 and 2014, but she is also considered a good friend by Shepherd, which Shepherd explicitly mentions in the video too. There is some overlap as well as backchanneling (mainly on Shepherd's part) during the interview, but interruptions occur quite scarcely. Shepherd instigates one successful interruption and three unsuccessful ones. Goldberg interrupts twice

with no attempts. The atmosphere is very warm, and Shepherd seems to hold tremendous respect towards Goldberg, evidenced by her breaking down to cry at the end of the interview.

01 Goldberg 'Cause I said at one point to her =you know it's a good
 02 thing (.) so my mother- my mother got sick (.) and she
 03 =was taken to Bellevue Hospital (.) because she had a
 04 Shepherd Mmm.
 05 Goldberg nervous breakdown. [And we-]
 06 Shepherd [This is] when you were young [yeah.]
 07 Goldberg [When I]
 08 was young and so (.) for me =it was a- it was a =scary
 09 time but not really as scary as (.) beneficial to me.
 10 Shepherd Yeah.

Example 6 Clarification interruption by Shepherd

Example 6, where Goldberg discusses her experience after her mother got sick, contains the only successful interruption by Shepherd. It is clearly a co-operative interruption, because it is a clarifying question. As can be seen in the transcript, Goldberg takes pauses mid-sentence, so Shepherd's interruption could also be an error in turn-taking, as she backchannels just before overlapping with Goldberg, which could have, in fact, signaled the beginning of Shepherd's speaking turn, because the backchannel happens during a pause in Goldberg's speech right before the overlap. However, as it is a clarifying question that cuts off Goldberg, I will categorize it as co-operative clarification.

01 Goldberg He- I'm ju- because he had this- he- my brother had a vibe (.)
 02 that you were =the most important person to him (.) =you know
 03 Shepherd Yes.=
 04 Goldberg when he talked to you (.) I would watch =I would go oh my God
 05 (.) 'cause then you go down the street with him and- and some,
 06 you know, we'd be in Boston or something and (.) suddenly some
 07 girl would fall out of a tree and be like (.) hi Clyde. (.) and
 08 I'd be like, who is that? (.) We just got here =we just got to
 09 town =who is this?=
 10 Shepherd =But I figured I had a little extra 'cause I
 11 worked with you for so long.
 12 Goldberg Yeah.
 13 Shepherd I- you- and when I heard about Clyde passing I remember I was so
 14 sad. (.) =But then I thought (.) I never got a chance to (.) it
 15 Goldberg Yeah.=
 16 Shepherd just never happened [but-]
 17 Goldberg [You] and so many. (.) You and so many.

Example 7 Agreement interruption by Goldberg

In example 7, Shepherd and Goldberg discuss Goldberg's late brother Clyde Johnson and Shepherd, who allegedly had a crush on Johnson, talks about never getting a chance to go out with him. Goldberg, who explains earlier in the video that many women seemed to be attracted to her brother, interrupts Shepherd in a joking manner by indicating that Shepherd is not the only one who wanted "a chance" with Johnson. While it cuts off Shepherd, the

intention is most likely co-operative and playful in nature, and thus it could be categorized as agreement.

At the beginning of the interview, Goldberg interrupts Shepherd's speaking turn by cutting her off to praise her looks (see example 8). While the act itself can be classified as an intrusive TCI, the intention is not intrusive, and Shepherd is clearly flattered by Goldberg's comment. Thus, I would not categorize this as an intrusive interruption, but rather a co-operative one. However, since it does not fall under assistance, agreement, or clarification category, I propose this to be a complex interruption. Objectively, it is intrusive, but the message conveyed by it is positive and supportive, yet it cannot be directly put in any of the co-operative categories.

```
01 Goldberg      I'm- you know (.) listen, I- you know, there's =there's (.)
02               there are so many ways that we can support each other (.)
03               and we started that early on.
04 Shepherd     Yeah.
05 Goldberg     We started that early on so =you know you just, I- I was
06               just glad to see you.
07 Shepherd     Well I'm so- thank you for taking my text and phone calls,
08               [I appreciate] that Whoopi.=
09 Goldberg     [ W-Well- ] =Always. (.) Always you know?
10 Shepherd     You know, it-
11 Goldberg     Can I just say you look terrific?
12 Shepherd     Oh man Whoopi thank you!
```

Example 8 Complex interruption by Goldberg

Both Shepherd and Goldberg give each other room to talk, and the almost nonexistent number of interruptions or attempts at interruption may be a sign of mutual respect, thus not supporting previous findings that women tend to interrupt each other. The interruptions that do occur can mainly be classified as co-operative interruptions, subclassified as agreement or assistance. One could argue that Goldberg's interruptions could be FTIs, but due to the overall warm and respectful tone of the interview, it is safe to assume that the interruptions are co-operative, or even just errors in turn-taking. Also, the interview is akin to a casual conversation between friends, which often enables more overlapping and interruptions (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974).

4.2.2 Lenny Kravitz (FM)

The atmosphere of the interview with musician Lenny Kravitz is quite "silly" compared to other interviews in this study due to the established context about Shepherd's sexual interest in Kravitz, which she discusses with the audience at the beginning of the video before inviting Kravitz into the studio.

During the interview, Shepherd instigates three successful interruptions and one unsuccessful one. Kravitz instigates three interruptions with no apparent attempts. There is some overlap during the interview, but most of it can be considered as errors in turn-taking, which both Shepherd and Kravitz repair quite fast by usually starting over when the other's speaking turn is done.

01 Shepherd That was so much fun =seeing Zoë say that, like do you enjoy
 02 getting roasted by your daughter?
 03 Kravitz Absolutely. (.) Absolutely, she uh- (.) you know (.) she =she
 04 Shepherd Yeah.
 05 Kravitz thinks I'm =funny and- [and- and] goofy and you know, I love
 06 Shepherd [Yeah.]
 07 Kravitz that we have- we have a lot of fun, we laugh a lot (.) =and
 08 Shepherd Uh-huh.=
 09 Kravitz uh =she's- she's the one who can roast me as she does all the
 10 time.
 11 Shepherd She does it [all the time?]
 12 Kravitz [Since-] Since she was a little girl yeah.

Example 9 Agreement interruption by Kravitz

In example 9, Shepherd and Kravitz discuss the speech that Kravitz's daughter, actress Zoë Kravitz, gave during the reveal of Kravitz's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2024. Here, Kravitz does speak over Shepherd, but as can be seen in the transcription, he uses a repair mechanism by stopping prematurely and beginning his sentence again after Shepherd finishes her follow-up question. This overlap in speech may be due to Shepherd's incorrect interpretation of the turns, as Kravitz may have intended to continue his speech, but the slight pause in speech was enough for Shepherd to cut in, which would make it a silent interruption on Shepherd's part. It is difficult to classify this interruption, but it could be co-operative, as neither aim to take the floor or change the topic. Shepherd seeks clarification to Kravitz's claim that his daughter "roasts" him all the time, and Kravitz signals agreement with the interruption. Since it is Kravitz whose speech overlaps with Shepherd's, I categorize this as a co-operative agreement on Kravitz's part.

01 Shepherd Look at my girl- you know we went to high school, Lisa
 02 and I =we gradu-
 03 Kravitz Birmingham?
 04 Shepherd Birmingham. Y- oh, did you go to Birminham?
 05 Kravitz No no no but I remember when we started dating and uh,
 06 she went to Birmingham and her mother was a school teacher,
 07 [I can't remember] if it was at Birmingham it might have
 08 Shepherd [Yeah.]
 09 Kravitz been (.) or another one of the schools in [there but-]
 10 Shepherd [You mean I] could
 11 have been dating you in Birmingham high school?

Example 10 Floor-taking interruption by Shepherd

In example 10, Shepherd and Kravitz discuss Kravitz's relationship with his ex-wife, actress Lisa Bonet, and Shepherd mentions that she went to school together with Bonet. This is the only time when Shepherd talks fully over Kravitz, leaning into the humorous setup of her attraction towards Kravitz. Once again, as the conversation changes the atmosphere from an interview to a more casual conversation, overlap is bound to happen (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). As can be seen in the transcription, Kravitz also cuts Shepherd off by clarifying that they went to Birmingham high school. While Shepherd's interruption is light-hearted, it could be classified as intrusive, as she takes the floor from Kravitz by focusing on her attraction towards him.

Most overlap as well as clear interruptions happen at the end of the interview, where Shepherd and Kravitz jokingly play out a breakup. The conversation is much more casual despite being a skit, but it supports the idea that most overlap usually happens in natural conversations. Otherwise, over the whole interview, Shepherd interestingly (and quite amusingly) instigates multiple *self-interruptions* (which could be classified as repair mechanisms due to her stopping prematurely and starting again several times, but she does not overlap with Kravitz) due to being "attracted" to Kravitz and thus being distracted by his presence. In example 11, Shepherd discusses Kravitz's fashion sense and him being featured in a fashion book, and as the cover photo of the fashion book is shown on the screen, Shepherd seems to instigate a tangentialization interruption on herself by seemingly being distracted by the photo (row 3).

```
01 Shepherd    You know, I- I love this Lenny because you were featured in
02              the latest CR fashion book issue and it was called Audacious.
03              Now I- th- ooh my gosh! (.) Lenny! Like- how does it feel to
04              be an- a- a fashion icon?
```

Example 11 Self-interruption by Shepherd

To the viewer, it seems that despite Kravitz sitting silently and letting Shepherd speak and instigating next to no interruptions, he dominates the situation with his nonverbal behavior (by, for example, moving closer to Shepherd as she already fumbles with her words) and makes Shepherd more distracted. Kravitz, otherwise, has a calm personality, reflected in his quiet voice and his way of giving Shepherd the floor and letting her collect herself. The findings clash with the idea that men tend to interrupt women more than vice versa, but this could be due to Kravitz's calm and quiet demeanor.

4.3 The Kelly Clarkson Show

The Kelly Clarkson Show is a recent daytime talk show that first aired in 2019 and is hosted by singer Kelly Clarkson. Like any other daytime talk show, the show consists of multiple segments with celebrities, games, and a music segment called “Kellyoke”, where Clarkson performs covers of famous songs. Over its six-year airtime, the show has won numerous awards and nominations. However, the show gained controversy in a 2023 *Rolling Stone* article when it was described as a “toxic work environment” by employees (Yandoli, 2023). However, Clarkson herself is generally considered a liked celebrity and received praise after addressing the toxicity allegations (Valdez, 2023).

4.3.1 Zendaya (FF)

There is quite a lot of overlap during the interview with actress and model Zendaya, with both Clarkson and Zendaya often beginning to speak at the end of each other’s sentences. The conversation also entails a lot of backchanneling, indicating their engagement in the interview. The overall atmosphere of the interview is warm and positive, as if two people are getting to know each other, giving the conversation a more casual tone.

Clarkson instigates seven interruptions, with two complex interruptions that are difficult to classify. Clarkson also backchannels a lot, and despite her interruptions possibly intending to be co-operative, she often starts talking over Zendaya, which can be very much interpreted as intrusive.

```
01  Zendaya      But it's also trying to find the balance of (.) what's for me (.)
02              what [can I-] what moments can [I say I'm having a day off.]
03  Clarkson    [Yeah. ] [ And it's okay ] by the
04              way, just 'cause we're in the =public eye doesn't mean you have to
05              give all your privacy up [you know?]
06  Zendaya    [Exactly. ]
```

Example 12 Floor-taking interruption by Clarkson

In example 12, Clarkson and Zendaya discuss how Zendaya manages to balance her work and her personal life. As can be seen, Clarkson engages in the conversation by backchanneling and signals further engagement by adding her own thoughts, however by speaking over Zendaya. It could be classified as an unsuccessful interruption, as Zendaya does finish her sentence even though Clarkson starts speaking. This happens a lot during the interview, as both participants do in fact finish their turns while overlap happens. One might argue that the interruption is supposed to be co-operative, as Clarkson keeps the conversation going and the interruption does not seem to disrupt the overall atmosphere, but Clarkson tends

to take the floor for herself by not letting her guest finish speaking, and thus it cannot be categorized as mere overlap or errors in turn-taking.

```

01 Zendaya      Exactly [ so ] I think this idea of loss, of grief, of a life and
02 Clarkson      [Yeah.]
03 Zendaya      a career that she never =even got the opportunity to- (.) to have,
04              um-
05 Clarkson      It's also interesting though to show people how you pivot to
06 some[thing else] (.) =because [ how you- ]
07 Zendaya      [ Yeah. ] Exactly.= [But it can] be dangerous, [right,]
08 Clarkson      [Yeah. ]
09 Zendaya      like [putting all] of your hopes and dreams into someone else.=
10 Clarkson      [ Girl! ] =Yeah.
11 Zendaya      Not a good [ idea. ]
12 Clarkson      [And the] pressure for that person, 'cause I felt real sorry
13 for one of those dudes [almost] the whole film.=
14 Zendaya      [Yeah. ] =Yeah.

```

Example 13 Floor-taking interruption by Zendaya

Zendaya instigates only one successful interruption and two attempts. During both of her unsuccessful interruptions, she begins her turn while Clarkson is still speaking, signaling starting with an inhale and hand gestures as well as vocalizations, but she gives the floor to Clarkson. Her only successful interruption can be seen in example 13, where her and Clarkson discuss her character in the movie *Challengers*. As can be seen in the transcription, both participants backchannel a lot and talk over each other, but Zendaya does also cut Clarkson off. This interruption is a clear FTI, because as mentioned earlier, Clarkson tends to talk over her guest in a possible attempt to keep the conversation going and signal her engagement, so it can be speculated that Zendaya may need to take the floor from Clarkson to be able to keep her speaking turn, because the transcription also shows Clarkson instigating a silent interruption moments before Zendaya's interruption (row 5).

Most of Clarkson's interruptions are co-operative, categorized as agreement and assistance, but she also instigates an FTI and a TCI, as well as another silent interruption, where Zendaya explains learning tennis for her role, and Clarkson chimes in during a pause in her speech, but Zendaya's hand movements and facial expressions implicate that she is not done with her speaking turn, despite giving the floor to Clarkson.

The general consensus that women tend to interrupt each other more than other men is supported here, but both parties are quite high energy and talkative personalities, which may play a part in the high number of interruptions, especially on Clarkson's part.

4.3.2 Terry Crews (FM)

The interview with actor Terry Crews entails a lot of overlapping. Most of the overlapping, however, can be considered as errors in turn taking that get repaired quite quickly, as the

atmosphere of the interview is positive and energetic, which may be the cause of the overlapping rather than either interlocutor meaning to dominate the conversation. Clarkson successfully interrupts Crews twice successfully and twice unsuccessfully. She backchannels a lot, indicating her engagement in the conversation as the host, and whenever she instigates an interruption attempt, she tries to interject rather than interrupt. Often, she ends up giving the floor to Crews herself (see example 15 where Clarkson tries to begin her turn during a pause in Crews' speech).

01 Crews I mean my whole NFL career was me getting cut (.) you know
 02 what I mean, I spent seven years in NFL, on =like =six
 03 different teams. (.) But I never- I wa- I was too dumb too
 04 Clarkson Yeah.
 05 Crews to stop, you know what I mean? [Becau-]
 06 Clarkson [Not dumb.] Somebody corrected
 07 me, I said that about myself one day and it- I think- I think
 08 it was Garth Brooks here =I did not mean to name drop but he
 09 did say- I wanted to give him credit.

Example 14 Disagreement interruption by Clarkson

In example 14, Clarkson and Crews discuss the importance of trying again despite not thriving in one's career. Crews explains being "too dumb" to stop his NFL career, which Clarkson cuts off. This is a clear DI, as Clarkson expresses disagreement with Crews' statement, thus interrupting intrusively.

01 Crews But he has this assassin club and he falls in love, uh,
 02 but he finds out he has a life-threatening =disease and
 03 he knows he's only gonna live for a little while (.) and
 04 Clarkson Yeah.
 05 Crews so he hires us =to put a hit- he puts a hit on himself (.)
 06 so he can kill himself and give the money to his girl. But
 07 then he finds out =he's not sick (.) and now he's like uh-oh
 08 Clarkson Ss-
 09 Crews and [he just ordered-] he ordered the hit of the century
 10 Clarkson [And try not to die.]
 11 Crews and we're going to get that money (.) okay?
 12 Clarkson Oh my god.

Example 15 Unsuccessful interruption by Clarkson

Example 15 shows Crews explaining the plot of the movie *The Killer's Game*. As can be seen in the transcript, Crews takes pauses during his speech, and at one point Clarkson tries to interject during one of these pauses. However, she stops abruptly and gives the floor to

Crews for him to continue his story. She talks over Crews by backchanneling but does not interrupt him and lets him finish his turn before reacting (i.e., saying “Oh my God.”).

```
01 Clarkson    And are you- you're- are you covering- you're doing track
02              and field is [that what you're-]
03 Crews       [ I- I- ] oh I'm doing everything.
04              (.) [ One ] of the reasons I host AGT is I wanna find out
05 Clarkson    [Okay.]
06 Crews       what makes people win like =what is the difference between
07              people who =are out there (.) and fail or who- the ones that
08              just keep going because I wanna know.
```

Example 16 Floor-taking interruption by Crews

Crews interrupts Clarkson only once, despite overlapping with her quite a lot. In the above example, Clarkson and Crews discuss Crews making an appearance in the 2024 Olympics. As can be seen in the transcript, Crews begins talking over Clarkson, cutting her question off. However, he begins his sentence again, which may indicate a simple error in turn-taking, especially since both parties talk a lot and quite fast, but since Clarkson does clearly get cut off, I will categorize this as an intrusive FTI. Most of the time, Crews and Clarkson speak over each other, but do not cut each other off and neither signals their speaking rights being violated, as both laugh a lot while these overlaps occur.

4.4 *Larry King Now*

Larry King Now was a talk show hosted by the late Larry King and was a spiritual successor to *Larry King Live*, which aired for 25 years between 1985 and 2010. *Larry King Now* aired for 8 years between 2012 and 2020. Larry King was known for his straight-to-the-point interviews, and the show is in fact the only one in my material that was not filmed in front of a live audience but had a premise similar to a podcast. King’s interviews were also usually very traditional question-answer type interviews instead of lively conversations.

Halper (2008, 138) states that both “stars who have behaved badly and want to make amends or candidates who have an announcement about their campaign, *Larry King Live* is where they want to be”, showing the general respect that the public had towards King. He was regarded as a good listener due to the format of his interviews and because of that he achieved a “titan status” early on (Timberg, Erler & Newcomb 2002, 158).

4.4.1 Sharon Osbourne (MF)

In the interview with English television personality Sharon Osbourne, there is quite little overlap. Speaking turns alter in a very orderly manner apart from some exceptions where the

participants may speak over each other at the end of their turns. King interrupts Osbourne nine times. Most of these interruptions are used to take the interview forward and occur usually when Osbourne gives a longer answer.

01 Osbourne Everything else is ten =and under or then you go to eighty thousand
 02 which is the Stadium =in London (.) so, the O2 has that (.)
 03 [twenty] thousand capacity and it's a very comfortable [building.]
 04 King [Yeah.] [So they're saying]
 05 if you wanna work there you gotta work Staples =why are they forcing him
 06 to work at a place he doesn't like?
 07 Osbourne Because they are in competition with Live Nation and Live Nation [run-]
 08 King [Owns] the
 09 Forum.
 10 Osbourne The Forum and the Madison Square Gardens (.) so =they ask-
 11 King Where does it stand
 12 right now?
 13 Osbourne We're suing them (.) because it's- um-
 14 King They're forcing you to work and you're
 15 saying you don't want.
 16 Osbourne We don't want to, [so-]
 17 King [But] you wanna work England?
 18 Osbourne We want- (.) and I honestly feel that Ozzy =has been doing it for fifty years
 19 (.) and I think that they owe it to Ozzy who's worked for them many times =many
 20 many times.

Example 17 Topic-changing and clarification interruptions by King

In example 17, King and Osbourne discuss Osbourne's plan to sue AEG over a contract dispute. King interrupts and talks over Osbourne several times, which could be his way to take the interview in a certain direction and to control Osbourne's answers. The interruptions are intrusive, because they cut off Osbourne mid-sentence and King does not let Osbourne continue her speaking turn. Thus, I categorize the first interruption (row 8) as a co-operative assistance interruption, the second (row 11) as an intrusive TCI, the third (row 14) as a co-operative assistance interruption, and the fourth (row 17) as a co-operative clarification.

01 King Do you have a dream guest?
 02 Osbourne Mmm- no we've had- we've- we're blessed with so many great people
 03 like you, you know from =the fabulous (.) Debbie Reynolds =you know
 04 we've had amazing people.
 05 King Oh I love Debbie.
 06 Osbourne You know, you could just talk to people like that forever.
 07 King Since this is [not-]
 08 Osbourne [Don] Rickles, everybody you know.=
 09 King =Oh Don. (.) Since
 10 this is not (.) The Talk (.) and it is =Larry King Now (.) what do
 11 you make of what you're seeing in Washington?

Example 18 Floor-taking interruption by Osbourne

Osbourne instigates two interruptions and one interruption attempt. Mostly, she lets King ask his questions and awaits her turn. There is also little overlap between their turns in general. In example 18, King attempts to take the interview forward, but Osbourne keeps talking over him, and King must start over. As King takes a small break in his speech after the false start, his previous attempt at taking the conversation forward could have been an error in

turn-taking on Osbourne's part, but since King has time to utter multiple words, I categorize the interruption as intrusive, most likely an FTI.

4.4.2 Corey Taylor (MM)

During the interview with musician Corey Taylor, King interrupts him eight times. Most of the time the interruptions are follow-up questions that take the interview forward and can be categorized as both co-operative and intrusive. Interestingly, King's interruptions fall into all interruption categories (excluding the complex category). There is little overlap during the interview and turns alter in an orderly manner, but when overlap does occur, it usually occurs when King asks another question or for clarification to Taylor's answers.

```

01 King           You have a special relationship with a lot of people in music
02                business [right,] you- you cross genres.=
03 Taylor         [Yeah. ]                               =I do yeah, yeah. [It's-]
04 King           [Like ]
05                =would people be surprised to know that you- (.)
06 Taylor         I think it would have
07                a long time ago but now because I've- I- I've talked about it so
08                much and I've tried to turn other people on to =like different types
09                of music (.) that it- it kind of makes sense now like, they- when I
10                talk about wanting to do (.) more acoustic stuff or like =Dowling and
11                jazz stuff like they kind of go =oh okay, [well it's-]
12 King           [ Is there ] someone you'd
13                like to collaborate with?
14 Taylor         Trent from (.) Nine Inch Nails, I've- I've wanted to work with him
15                forever, like one of the biggest fans of him =and- and his song[writing.]
16 King           [ Are ]
17                there rappers you like?

```

Example 19 Topic-changing interruption by King

In example 19, King and Taylor discuss the different music genres that Taylor has explored and whether he would like to collaborate with other musicians. As can be seen in the example, King interrupts Taylor's story, most likely to take the interview forward. Because his interruption cuts Taylor off, I categorize it as an intrusive interruption, more precisely a TCI, as King changes topic from Taylor's interests to people with whom he would like to work. It could also be a tangentialization, but since King does not directly refer to anything Taylor has said previously (for example, clarifying if Taylor likes any specific jazz musician), it is safe to assume that the interruption is indeed a TCI.

Taylor instigates only one clear interruption with two silent interruptions that do not necessarily intrude. Interestingly, the clear interruption happens during a part of the conversation where King asks Taylor about the fans of his bands Slipknot and Stone Sour, who clearly are important to Taylor as an artist (see example 20 below). Momentarily, the interview takes a more friendly and perhaps even casual form, thus enabling Taylor to engage more actively. Otherwise, Taylor listens to King and gives him the floor most of the time. The

interruption is most likely an FTI, which may be due to Taylor’s pride in his fans, about whom Taylor seems to like to talk.

01 King All young people?
 02 Taylor No, no it's very generational, [um-]
 03 King [Really?] You mean there's
 04 [seventy-year-old-]
 05 Taylor [I'm on third-]generation Slipknot fans right now which
 06 is insane to me yeah.
 07 King So they're in their sixties and seventies?
 08 Taylor Well- well they're in their forties =having kids you know,
 09 I got fifty-year-old Slipknot fans who've had kids who are
 10 now having kids and bringing them to our shows.

Example 20 Floor-taking interruption by Taylor

4.5 Conan

Conan was a late-night talk show created and hosted by Conan O’Brien after he departed *The Tonight Show* in 2009, having aired for 11 years between 2010 and 2021. As a late-night talk show, it included multiple segments such as comedy or musical guests. In opposition to other traditional late-night talk shows, the interviews in *Conan* last a little longer, being approximately 15 minutes long. It should be mentioned that O’Brien hosted the show with actor and comedian Andy Richter. However, in the interviews – at least those chosen for this study – O’Brien does nearly all of the interviewing, and I have decided to ignore any overlap or interruptions that include Richter’s input.

O’Brien is generally considered a liked host and was even described by Murthi (2024) as “one of our last classic entertainers, and he represents a connection to an era of showbiz that has long since evaporated.” However, there have been incidents where his actions towards his female interviewees have been considered “creepy” by audiences, despite no celebrities coming forward themselves about his behavior. Thus, his career has remained fairly controversy-free.

4.5.1 Mila Kunis (MF)

The interview with actress Mila Kunis has a somewhat personal atmosphere to it, as Kunis and O’Brien are friends and neighbors in their personal lives, and their relationship can be seen to affect the overall atmosphere of the interview. Kunis and O’Brien have known each other for a long time, as it is also revealed during the interview that Kunis’ first appearance on a talk show almost 20 years earlier was, in fact, on *Late Night with Conan O’Brien*.

During the interview, O'Brien interrupts Kunis three times and instigates one interruption attempt. Mostly, he lets Kunis finish her answers and does not interrupt even if her answer is a longer one. There is some overlap in the conversation, but mostly it does not disrupt the flow of the conversation. Due to Kunis and O'Brien's personal relationship, overlapping is to be expected, as the conversation feels much more casual than in other interviews examined in this paper.

01 Kunis And then I decided to deep dive into NFTs (.) and so through the
02 pandemic created (.) a- a- a (.) piece of, uh- a form of entertainment
03 =called Stoner Cats that we're releasing =in a couple weeks that is
04 an NFT (.) [and] you can buy (.) such Stoner Cats and then that is
05 O'Brien [Yeah.]
06 Kunis your token =to then watch a five minute long =piece of entertainment
07 =of a Sto- [called Stoner Cats.]
08 O'Brien [That actually sounds like a really-] it sounds like a cool
09 idea and I know you've had experience in animation and comedy =so we
10 have, uh =I think we have a picture here of the Stoner Cats.
11 Kunis This is- yep, and uh- it's really cool guys, 'cause I'll tell you,
12 in- (.)
13 O'Brien They're very-
14 Kunis Thanks guys.
15 O'Brien Yeah.
16 Kunis I'll s- so here's the thing going in-
17 O'Brien I was gonna say cats just sit around
18 anyway.
19 Kunis Well guess what happens when they get [stoned.]
20 O'Brien [Yeah yeah] yeah.

Example 21 Tangentialization interruption by O'Brien

In example 21, Kunis explains becoming interested in cryptocurrency and creating an animation series called *Stoner Cats*. As can be seen in the transcription, O'Brien lets Kunis have the floor as she explains the premise of the series, with slight overlap that he repairs by starting his speaking turn again. Both Kunis and O'Brien get cut off by the audience's reaction to the series (rows 12-14), which I have not included in the quantitative data. However, O'Brien does cut Kunis off at the end, as she tries to continue her speaking turn, but O'Brien talks over her to joke about cats. This could be interpreted as confusion in turn-taking, as previously both parties get interrupted by the audience, but since Kunis clearly begins her turn and then gets cut off by O'Brien, I will categorize this as an intrusive tangentialization.

Kunis interrupts O'Brien seven times and instigates one unsuccessful interruption and one complex one. She mostly lets O'Brien guide the interview and listens to him, but she seems to get very excited when she talks, thus easily speaking over O'Brien. Her interruptions are both intrusive and co-operative, mostly FTIs, tangentializations, and agreements.

In example 23, Rogen and O'Brien discuss the development of Rogen's 2013 film *This Is the End*, for which he asked the rapper Snoop Dogg to perform a song. Rogen tells O'Brien about a person hired to "roll joints" for Snoop Dogg, which O'Brien confirms by interjecting and thus speaking over Rogen. The intention of the interruption may be co-operative, as O'Brien signals agreement and confirmation, but as he starts speaking clearly before Rogen is done with his turn, it can be interpreted as an intrusive FTI. However, Rogen does not seem to signal annoyance or other expressions of his speaking rights being violated, as he maintains a high energy throughout the interview.

01 O'Brien It's not that I have any problem with people, uh, smoking pot,
 02 I think it's actually =you know a- a- seems to be a fine herb
 03 (.) uh but (.) [I enjoy it-]
 04 Rogen [If there was] ever a sign you didn't smoke weed
 05 it's that you just called it a fine [herb.]
 06 O'Brien [It's a fine] herb as I'm
 07 told, but (.) the couple of times I've tried it =like it didn't-
 08 i- nothing really happened.=
 09 Rogen =Really?

Example 24 Tangentialization interruption by Rogen

Rogen interrupts O'Brien four times. Three of the interruptions are intrusive, mainly tangentializations, and one is co-operative. In example 24, O'Brien and Rogen discuss Rogen's use of cannabis in a lighthearted way. As can be seen in the transcription, both Rogen and O'Brien speak over each other, which occurs throughout the interview. While it can be interpreted as just overlapping and errors in turn-taking, studying the overlap more closely gives one an idea that both interlocutors seem to favor taking the floor to themselves. It is not necessarily to dominate the conversation, but to interact and entertain, as both interlocutors are also comedians. In this type of conversation, overlap is to be expected. The overlap by O'Brien can be categorized as a simple error in turn-taking as it overlaps with Rogen's speech only slightly, but earlier in the transcription, Rogen clearly talks over O'Brien. Rogen laughs during O'Brien's turn and may just want to interject, but as he cuts O'Brien off completely, I categorize Rogen's interruption as an intrusive tangentialization.

4.6 *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Jimmy Kimmel Live! is a long-running late-night talk show created as well as hosted by Jimmy Kimmel, having first aired in 2003 and still continuing today. Over the years, it has established its position as a competitor for the long-running shows *The Tonight Show* and *The Late Show*. Over its 20-year history, the show has won several awards and nominations for being a staple in late-night entertainment.

Following the retirement of talk show juggernauts Jay Leno, David Letterman, and Jon Stewart in the mid-2010s, Kimmel ranked as the third-longest-running talk show host. After Conan O'Brien's show ended in 2021, Kimmel moved up to second place, only behind Bill Maher. However, despite being one of the biggest names in entertainment, Kimmel and his show have not avoided controversy. Over the years, Kimmel has faced criticism especially for racism and sexist behavior (Duke 2013; Nolan, 2020) as well as ignorant behavior towards fellow celebrities (Costantino 2022). Despite this, Kimmel remains as one of the most popular talk show hosts, with Power (2024) calling him “uncancelable”.

4.6.1 Michelle Obama (MF)

The interview with former First Lady Michelle Obama entails much overlap, where one interlocutor starts speaking over the other speaker, but they finish their sentence. Kimmel interrupts Obama six times, mainly to ask clarifying questions to Obama's answers.

```

01 Kimmel      One of the most interesting things I learned from your book
02              is that (.) the president, first lady, family =you have to
03              pay for your food.
04 Obama       Ye[ ah. ]
05 Kimmel      [While] you're in the White [House. ]
06 Obama       [ Go ] figure.
07 Kimmel      A- (.) [that's] crazy to me.=
08 Obama       [Yeah. ] =Well, you know, i- it is and it
09              isn't =it's crazy because you don't know it and most people
10              don't know what it's like to live in the White House so, you
11              know =only forty-five families have done it [ =um ] (.) but,
12 Kimmel      [Yeah.]
13 Obama       true the- rent is free, staff is free (.) you know (.) we-
14              we shouldn't be mooching off of the taxpayers but-
15 Kimmel      You're okay
16              with that?
17 Obama       Yeah but it's a little shocking because nobody really tells
18              you this stuff and [then] they let you get whatever you want
19              (.) um- like if you say you want some exotic fruit =yes ma'am
20              we'll get that right away, and then you get the bill for a peach
21              (.) and it's like =that was a five hundred dollar peach!
```

Example 25 Clarification interruption by Kimmel

In example 25, Kimmel and Obama discuss the presidential family's life in the White House. Obama explains that while living in the White House is free, acquiring food is not. As can be seen in the example, both interlocutors overlap with each other, mainly by backchanneling and contributing to the conversation, but eventually Kimmel cuts Obama off by asking a clarifying question of whether paying for their own food is fine with her, to which Obama answers positively and continues her story. It does not seem to violate Obama's speaking rights and may just be an interjection by Kimmel with an error in turn-taking, but since it cuts off Obama's speech, I categorize it as co-operative clarification.

Obama interrupts Kimmel four times. She backchannels and interjects her thoughts during the interview quite a lot, but most of her interjections do not interrupt Kimmel's speech. Her interruptions are both intrusive and co-operative. It is quite challenging to determine which overlaps are indeed interruptions and which are errors in turn-taking, as both parties are very engaged in the conversation.

```

01 Kimmel      Can I tell you =when I was reading about (.) you
02              mentioning in your book that his office is messy
03              and disorganized, [ it gave me ] a license to have
04 Obama              [Oh yeah yes.]
05 Kimmel      (.) a messy and disorganized office (.)
06              [because my wife gets upset] (.)
07 Obama      [ Was it like that before? ]
08 Kimmel      Oh it's a disaster but now I feel like =well yeah,
09              [ so it's- ]
10 Obama      [Yeah the President.]
11 Kimmel      Yeah the President does that [too.]
12 Obama              [Yeah] I'm good, I'm good.
13 Kimmel      Yeah. (.) [It's seems to me, and-]
14 Obama              Clean [ up (.) your room. ] It's annoying.
15 Kimmel      Are you sending [ a message to your ] husband
16 Obama              [I'm- I'm here for Molly.]
17 Kimmel      through [me, is that- it's for me. ]
18 Obama              [No I meant- get your stuff] together [yeah.]
19 Kimmel              [Yeah.]

```

Example 26 Floor-taking interruption by Obama

As can be seen in example 26, Obama and Kimmel speak over each other quite a lot, without interrupting each other. The atmosphere is positive, and both parties laugh a lot, also eliciting a lot of laughter from the audience. However, Obama interrupts Kimmel (row 12), who is most likely trying to take the interview forward, by joking about cleaning his room, like a mother would to a child. While Kimmel laughs and does not signal his speaking turn being violated, this interruption is still intrusive, as Kimmel's speech does get cut off. Therefore, I categorize it as an intrusive FTI, as Obama takes the comedic floor by telling Kimmel to clean his room.

4.6.2 Harrison Ford (MM)

The interview with actor Harrison Ford is the most recent interview in my study and contains some overlapping, where both parties talk over each other but do not necessarily interrupt each other. At other times, there is a discernible pause between speaking turns. Thus, the overlapping could be classified as simple errors in turn-taking. During the interview, Kimmel interrupts only once and instigates one interruption attempt, whereas Ford interrupts five

times. Interestingly, Ford is the only person in my data to express his speaking rights being violated. While Kimmel does not interrupt Ford, Ford notes that he was not given a chance to speak to which Kimmel answers that Ford is allegedly a difficult guest, albeit in a humorous way (see example 27 below). While it seems that Ford is not actually annoyed by Kimmel not letting him answer his question, it is worth mentioning that Ford's remark is in fact an *interruption display* (a term coined by Bilmes (1997), meaning those verbal and nonverbal signals of annoyance, offense, or other reactions awoken by being interrupted).

```

01 Kimmel      It's very good to see you.
02 Ford        It's very nice to be seen, [ thank you. ]
03 Kimmel      [How are you?] (.) I wish we could-
04             I wish our all- [yes.]
05 Ford        [Wait] you just asked me how I was.
06 Kimmel      How are you?
07 Ford        You didn't let me answer.
08 Kimmel      I knew you were gonna give me a weird answer because (.) y-
09             because there's something that you do and I- I've picked- I've
10             finally figured it out after all these years =you've been on the
11             show a lot of times (.) you come here and you torture everyone (.)
12             including me (.) in the funniest possible way.

```

Example 27 Interruption display by Ford

Kimmel's only interruption happens when he asks a clarifying question in the middle of Ford's story about a past job as a chef at a hospital. As can be seen in example 28, Kimmel does not necessarily interrupt Ford's speech but interjects during a pause, but since Ford's filler word "uh" (row 10) indicates that his speaking turn is not done, I classify the interruption as a co-operative clarification. Kimmel's reaction to the fact that Ford's wound could be mended down the hall (row 14) could also be classified as an interruption, perhaps a co-operative agreement, but it does not truly interrupt Ford's speech and may rather be an interjection during a pause or a form of backchanneling, which Kimmel exhibits during the interview, and Ford continues his speech. Thus, I will not categorize it as an interruption.

```

01 Kimmel      Have you worked as a cook?
02 Ford        Fo- ff- for relatively short periods of time (.) uh- (.) until they
03             (.) found out about me and fired me.
04 Kimmel      Uh huh. (.) Where did you cook?
05 Ford        I- um- my first job was uh- I- I cooked at a- a hospital.
06 Kimmel      Oh, really?
07 Ford        I don't know what I told them but uh- they gave me a knife (.) and a
08             bunch of carrots (.) and I c- I cut this part of my finger off (.)
09 Kimmel      Humm. Oh, yeah.
10 Ford        within minutes, uh-
11 Kimmel      At the hospital?
12 Ford        Yeah. (.) W- But they- (.) sew your finger on, uh- back on- department
13             was right down- (.)
14 Kimmel      Oh great!
15 Ford        Down the hall (.) and right after that was (.) where they fire you.

```

Example 28 Clarification interruption by Kimmel

All of Ford's interruptions are intrusive, either FTIs or tangentializations. Mostly, he lets Kimmel finish his questions, and at times, his nonverbal behavior also indicates that he is waiting for his turn to speak (by pausing his movement and looking at Kimmel). However, at other times, he simply talks over Kimmel and even at one point begins singing while Kimmel is still speaking. This behavior leans into Kimmel's comment at the beginning of the interview that Ford "tortures" people whenever he visits a talk show, so Kimmel does not seem to take offense to the behavior, and it also elicits a lot of laughter from the audience. Objectively however, Ford's behavior is indeed intrusive.

01 Kimmel This is- wh- you're living where at [the time?]
 02 Ford [Chicago] =I was- uh- working on a yacht
 03 that was owned by the- (.) the youngest bank president in Chicago at the time.
 04 Kimmel He had a yacht.=
 05 Ford =And a boutonnière.
 06 Kimmel Well =he had a boutonnière?
 07 Ford And he wore one of those hats (.) with a- with the (.) scrambled eggs on the
 08 stuff?
 09 Kimmel Oh yeah- captain hat? [Really?]
 10 Ford [Y- Yeah] captain hat (.) with the boutonnière and (.) he
 11 was a nice guy (.) but he didn't know much about cooking.
 12 Kimmel Uh huh. Uh huh =well it-
 13 fortunately for you-
 14 Ford But he- he was the heir to the Swift meat-packing.
 15 Kimmel Oh really?
 16 Ford So all I had to do is buy really expensive beef.

Example 29 Floor-taking interruption by Ford

In example 29, Ford and Kimmel discuss a past job Ford had cooking on a yacht. As can be seen in the transcription, Ford takes pauses in his speech, while Kimmel backchannels and reacts to his stories, with turns alternating in a quite orderly manner. There is not much overlapping, but Ford does interrupt Kimmel to continue his story. This could indicate that Kimmel has interpreted the turns incorrectly and Ford takes the floor to signal to Kimmel that his turn is not finished. While it could be an unsuccessful interruption on Kimmel's part, I will not categorize it as such, since Kimmel does not interrupt Ford, and it could easily be interpreted that Ford was done speaking. Thus, I categorize this as an intrusive interruption on Ford's part, more specifically FTI.

5 Discussion

By calculating the number of clear and successful interruptions in each interview, I found that interruptions occurred 89 times, 49 (55.1%) of which were instigated by men and 40 (44.9%) of which by women. Men interrupted intrusively 24 times and co-operatively 25 times, whereas women interrupted intrusively 18 times and co-operatively 22 times. Out of the 89 interruptions, 52 (58.4%) were instigated by the host, whereas the guest interrupted 37 (41.6%) times. Women attempted interrupting 11 times, whereas men attempted interruption four times.

Next, I will discuss my hypotheses and whether support for them was found in this study. My first hypothesis suggested that men would interrupt intrusively more than women, and that they would interrupt women more than other men. This hypothesis was partially supported. There was some support for the view that men interrupt more frequently than women (Zimmerman & West 1975), and that women tend to use more co-operative language, such as backchanneling (Hannah & Murachver 2007). However, the difference in men's interruption patterns was not prominent in my findings, which contradicts with previous research suggesting that men's language tends to be more assertive (Leaper & Ayres 2007).

My second hypothesis suggested that women would get interrupted successfully by both men and other women, whereas men getting interrupted would be less successful regardless of the gender of the interrupter. Women got interrupted 43 times (48.3%), 25 of which by men and 18 of which by other women. Men, on the other hand, got interrupted 46 times (51.7%), 24 of which by other men and 22 of which by women. An interesting finding is that men got interrupted by other men slightly more than by women, which contradicts with the previous beliefs that same-sex interruptions occur less than mixed-sex interruptions (Kennedy & Camden 1983). However, regarding women, mixed-sex interruptions did occur more often than same-sex ones. Support for this hypothesis was contradictory, as the gender difference in the number of successful interruptions was small, with interruptions towards men occurring slightly more often.

My third hypothesis suggested that the higher-status interlocutor (i.e., the interviewer) would interrupt more regardless of gender. As mentioned earlier, the interviewer interrupted their guest 52 times, whereas the interviewee interrupted the host 37 times. This shows support for my hypothesis, as the difference in numbers is considerable enough to draw a conclusion that the higher-status interlocutor tends to interrupt more, which also supports previous findings (Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz 1985; Youngquist 2009). The host

interrupted intrusively 21 times and co-operatively 31 times, whereas the guest interrupted intrusively 21 times and co-operatively 16 times. Thus, while the hosts interrupted their guests more in general, the interruptions were more co-operative, whereas the guests used more intrusive interruptions, which is an interesting finding. This suggests that the guests interrupted mostly to control the flow of the interview, whereas the guests interrupted to keep or take the speaking floor. This finding contradicts with Li's (2001) finding that the person with more power would interrupt intrusively, whereas the more low-status person would interrupt more co-operatively.

At the beginning of this thesis, I introduced my research questions and will next discuss what answers I found in my study. To revise, my research questions are:

1. What role does gender play in the occurrence of intrusive versus co-operative interruptions between men and women?
2. What role does gender play in the occurrence and number of successful and unsuccessful interruptions?
3. What role does gender play in the number of interruptions instigated by the interviewer versus the interviewee?

To answer the first question, men's language seems to be slightly more assertive as it has been found to be (Leaper & Ayres 2007). However, the difference between intrusive and co-operative interruptions was minimal. Women, on the other hand, seemed to favour co-operative language, which manifested in more co-operative interruptions and overall backchanneling (see Sapabsri et al. 2018).

Regarding the second question, I found that while there was some support for the previous sentiment that men interrupt more than women, gender did not play a prominent role in the number of interruptions overall. However, gender did play a role in unsuccessful interruptions, as women attempted to interrupt more often than men did and often gave up the speaking floor. However, it should be noted that the interruption attempts were targeted at both men and women, as no notable difference was found on who women attempted to interrupt more. It also seemed to have more to do with the personality and talkativeness of the conversation partner rather than gender, as the unsuccessful interruptions occurred more likely if the conversation partner was very high energy.

To answer the final question, gender did not seem to be a prominent factor in the interruptions between the host and the guest, as the host interrupted notably more than the guest regardless of gender. However, male hosts interrupted considerably more often, with 32 interruptions, whereas female hosts interrupted 20 times. The gender difference between

guests was smaller, with male guests interrupting 17 times and female guests 22 times. This finding ties into the theory that the person with more contextual and societal power tends to interrupt more (Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz 1985), with men often being the ones to hold those powerful positions (Youngquist 2009).

While men interrupted more frequently than women overall (49 vs. 40 interruptions), gender did not play a big enough role to fully support the first two hypotheses. However, the findings aligned with the third hypothesis, suggesting that interruption patterns were more strongly influenced by the status of the interlocutor rather than by gender. Higher-status participants (i.e., the interviewers), regardless of gender, interrupted more frequently than their lower-status counterparts. This suggests that conversational dominance is driven more by hierarchical positioning rather than gender alone, which supports the findings of Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1985), as well as James and Clarke (1993). Male hosts interrupting more than female hosts can be explained by the fact that men tend to often hold these higher positions in society, thus being the ones to engage in interruptive and dominant behavior.

The participants' personalities and personal relationships should also be considered, as it can be assumed that a calm, quieter participant may interrupt less than a loud, higher-energy participant. This was evident in my data, as certain individuals interrupted notably more than others, which suggests their behavior being more linked to personality-related aspects rather than gender or social role. For example, Kelly Clarkson interrupted both successfully and unsuccessfully both of her guests and engaged in the conversations a lot. Larry King also instigated many interruptions at both of his guests but did not backchannel otherwise. Seth Rogen and Mila Kunis were both energetic in their respective interviews and thus engaged in more interruptions than many other guests.

Age-gaps seemed to also play a role in some cases, where one interlocutor was much older than the other, as the older one tended to interrupt more than the younger one, which is evident in the interview with both Cher and Harrison Ford, whose interruptions are occasionally quite blunt. Conversations between people of smaller age-gap did not necessarily contain as big a difference in interruptions. Thus, power dynamics and status hierarchies play a pivotal role in shaping conversational behavior.

The results highlight the importance of considering contextual and relational factors, such as status or personal relationships, when examining conversational behaviors. For instance, researchers such as Aries (1996) and James and Clarke (1993) have argued that status often supersedes gender in determining conversational behaviors, a perspective supported by this study. My results diverge from earlier research (e.g., Zimmerman & West

1975), which emphasized gendered interruption patterns, and instead align more closely with studies suggesting that hierarchical and social power dynamics are a stronger determinant of interruption frequency (e.g., Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz 1985).

The contextual factors that may or may not affect the flow of conversation and how one perceives possible interruptions is a key motive for the Participant-oriented Approach (Köktürk & Özkürk 2012), because two friends having a casual conversation may react to interruptions in a very different way than two strangers between whom there is a large imbalance in power (say, a subordinate interrupting their employer). As mentioned earlier, culture is one of the most important factors that can influence how we perceive being interrupted. In Western societies, interruption can be perceived as rude, especially in contexts where interrupting should not be expected (i.e., usually someone with less power interrupting someone with more power). These are all factors that should be considered in future research, as merely categorizing something as interruptions or engaging in a conversation could be problematic without considering all the societal and contextual factors that shape our conversations.

Even though prominent gender differences did not emerge in this study, the findings are still intriguing from the perspective of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. Since gender is closely linked to broader social factors such as status and culture, further research into gender differences in interruptions – focusing on how these behaviors are perceived – would be valuable. Additionally, examining talk shows from various cultural contexts could shed light on how culture influences not only gender-related findings but also those related to status, age, and interpersonal relationships.

6 Conclusion

This study explored the complex dynamics of interruptions in both cross-sex and same-sex interview settings, focusing on three main hypotheses that explored the interplay between status, gender, and other contributing factors. Interruption studies in the past have often produced conflicting or contradictory findings, and this study was no exception – it revealed patterns that both aligned with and diverged from the previous research. While such inconsistencies are common in discourse studies, some of the specific results were nonetheless unexpected. One particularly surprising outcome was the minimal difference in interruption patterns between genders, especially when contrasted with the much more noticeable differences observed between individuals of differing status – namely, between talk show hosts and their guests.

This finding challenges the often-assumed centrality of gender in conversational dynamics and underscores the significant role that social status plays in shaping interruptive behavior. The study highlights that, despite decades of research, the analysis of interruptions continues to yield fresh and sometimes surprising insights into how people navigate conversations – insights that are central to the goals of Critical Discourse Analysis. CDA seeks to uncover the subtle ways in which power, dominance, and inequality are enacted through language and this study contributes to that mission by revealing how interruption patterns reflect and reinforce social hierarchies in public discourse.

Given these findings, further research is warranted. Future studies should continue to explore interruption dynamics in the context of Western talk shows, a relatively under-researched area in the field of discourse analysis. These programs offer a rich environment for investigation, as they feature interactions between individuals with clearly defined and often contrasting status roles. For instance, high-status hosts may use interruptions strategically – to guide the conversation, reinforce authority, or maintain control of the dialogue – whereas lower-status guests might interrupt to gain visibility, assert their perspectives, or resist dominant viewpoints.

Moreover, studying interruptions in such high-profile settings can shed light on how these communicative behaviors are perceived by audiences. It would be valuable to investigate whether and how interruptions influence viewers' perceptions of a speaker's authority, credibility, or politeness, and how these perceptions might vary depending on the speaker's gender, age, cultural background, or relationship to the host. Ultimately, understanding the nuances of interruptive behavior in public discourse could help media

professionals and communicators foster more balanced, inclusive, and dynamic conversations that better reflect the diversity of voices in society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Finnish summary

Keskusteluohjelmat (englanniksi *talk show*) ovat olleet olennainen osa radio- ja televisioviihdettä ympäri maailmaa jo lähes 100 vuotta, mutta keskusteluohjelmien juurten uskotaan ulottuvan jopa 1500- ja 1600-luvun Italiaan ja Ranskaan, missä oli tapana järjestää viikoittaisia keskustelutapahtumia, joissa otettiin kantaa yhteiskunnallisiin ja kulttuurisiin ilmiöihin (Ilie 2006). Yhdysvalloissa puheradio-ohjelmat yleistyivät 1930-luvun vaihteessa (Halper 2008), ja formaatti siirtyi televisioihin 1940-luvulle tultaessa, kasvattaen suosiotaan rajusti 1950- ja 1960-luvuilla (Timberg, Erler & Newcomb 2002). Ajankohdasta ja formaatista riippumatta keskusteluohjelmat ovat aina olleet viihdemuoto, joka voi pitää sisällään musiikkia ja komediaa tai olla lähempänä uutis- ja väittelyohjelmia. Keskusteluohjelmat ovat keino niin julkisuuden henkilöille kuin tavallisille ihmisille tuoda esiin omia näkemyksiään yhteiskunnan ja kulttuurin ilmiöistä (Ilie 1999).

Keskusteluohjelmia on hankala luokitella kielitieteen näkökulmasta, sillä ei ole olemassa tarpeeksi tutkimusta siitä, mikä erottaa keskusteluohjelmat muunlaisesta institutionaalisesta diskurssista, kuten lääketieteellisistä tai poliittisista haastatteluista (Ilie 1999, 210). Keskusteluohjelmissä keskustelu on usein rentoa ja tyyliltään samanlaista kuin kahden tavallisen henkilön välisessä keskustelussa, vaikka aiheet olisivat virallisempia ja vakavampia. Ne kuitenkin eroavat tavallisesta keskustelusta siinä, että liveyleisö reagoi usein osallistujien keskusteluun, jota juontaja ohjailee, mikä vie keskusteluohjelmasta eräänlaisen rentoon keskusteluun kuuluvan dynaamisuuden. Lisäksi Ilie (ibid.) mainitsee, että keskusteluohjelmat eroavat myös toisistaan, sillä jotkin ovat tyyliltään viihdyttäviä ja yleisön huomioon ottavia, kun taas toiset käsittelevät vakavia aiheita ja vastaavat tyyliltään uutisia tai jopa väittelyä. Myös saman keskusteluohjelman eri jaksot saattavat poiketa toisistaan. Tämän takia on vaikeaa eritellä tiettyjä kielitieteellisiä ominaisuuksia, jotka määrittelevät sen, mitä keskusteluohjelmat ovat (ibid.).

Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma tutkii sukupuolten välisiä valtaeroja keskeytyksissä yhdysvaltalaisissa keskusteluohjelmissä. Tutkielma hyödyntää Lazarin (2005) luotsaamaa feminististä diskurssianalyysiä, Saksin, Schegloffin ja Jeffersonin (1974) kehittämää keskusteluanalyysiä ja Köktürkin ja Özkürkin (2012) sovellusta siitä, sekä Muratan (1994) ja Lin (2001) kehittämiä keskeytyskategorioita. Erityisesti Lazarin feministinen diskurssianalyysi on kiinnostunut niistä yhteiskunnallisista näkemyksistä ja asenteista, jotka

vaikuttavat eri sukupuoliin kohdistuvaan kielenkäyttöön sekä sukupuolittuneeseen kieleen, mitä on tutkittu pitkään erityisesti feministitutkijoiden johtamana, pioneerinaan Robin Lakoff (1975).

Keskeytyksiä on tutkittu vuosikymmeniä eri konteksteissa, mutta erityisesti länsimaisten keskusteluohjelmien näkökulmasta tutkimusta on vielä melko vähän. Keskeytyksiä on tutkittu muun muassa tavallisessa keskustelussa (Zimmerman & West 1975), poliittisissa keskusteluissa (Beattie 1982), lääketieteellisissä haastatteluissa (Plug et al. 2022), vanhempien ja lasten välillä (West & Zimmerman 1977), radiohaastatteluissa (Hutchby 1992) sekä kuvitteellisissa televisiosarjoissa (Zhao & Gantz 2003). Keskusteluohjelmien kontekstissa keskeytyksiä on tutkittu erityisesti 2020-luvulle tultaessa (esim. Tao 2018; Khan & Shahid 2019; Habibi, Hidayat & Alek 2020), mutta tutkimus sijoittuu pitkälti Kaakkois- ja Etelä-Aasian konteksteihin.

Loin tätä tutkimusta varten seuraavat tutkimuskysymykset, joihin annan vastaukset jäljempänä:

1. Mikä rooli sukupuolella on tungettelevien ja yhteistoiminnallisten keskeytysten ilmenemisessä?
2. Mikä rooli sukupuolella on onnistuneiden ja epäonnistuneiden keskeytysten ilmenemisessä ja lukumäärässä?
3. Mikä rooli sukupuolella on haastattelijan ja haastateltavan tuottamien keskeytysten välillä ja niiden lukumäärässä?

Luomieni tutkimuskysymysten sekä aiemman tutkimustiedon perusteella esitän kolme hypoteesia. Ensimmäisen hypoteesin mukaan miehet keskeyttäisivät enemmän kuin naiset ja suosivat tungetteleviä keskeytyksiä, ja että heidän keskeytyksensä kohdistuisivat enemmän naisiin kuin miehiin (esim. James & Clarke 1993). Hypoteesini mukaan naiset sen sijaan suosisivat yhteistoiminnallisia keskeytyksiä, jotka kohdistuisivat enemmän toisiin naisiin. Toisen hypoteesini mukaan sekä miesten että naisten onnistuneet keskeytykset kohdistuisivat enemmän naisiin, kun taas miehiin kohdistuvia onnistuneita keskeytyksiä olisi vähemmän (ibid.), eikä keskeyttäjän sukupuolella olisi tässä suurta merkitystä. Kolmannen ja viimeisen hypoteesini mukaan se henkilö, jolla on tilannesidonnaisesti enemmän valtaa (tässä haastattelija), keskeyttäisi enemmän sukupuoleen katsomatta (esim. Beaumont 2009).

Tutkielmaan kerättiin materiaali YouTubesta kuuden eri keskusteluohjelman omalta kanavalta. Tutkielmassa tutkittiin kuutta keskusteluohjelmaa, joista kustakin kerättiin kaksi

haastattelua aineistoon. Kussakin ohjelmassa toinen haastateltava oli mies ja toinen nainen, ja kolme keskusteluohjelmaa oli miehen juontamia ja kolme naisen juontamia. Tutkittavat juontajat olivat Ellen DeGeneres, Sherri Shepherd, Kelly Clarkson, Larry King, Conan O'Brien ja Jimmy Kimmel. Tutkittavat haastateltavat olivat Cher, Leonardo DiCaprio, Whoopi Goldberg, Lenny Kravitz, Zendaya, Terry Crews, Sharon Osbourne, Corey Taylor, Mila Kunis, Seth Rogen, Michelle Obama sekä Harrison Ford. Siispä tutkimusmateriaali koostui yhteensä 12 haastattelusta.

Tutkimusta varten loin kriteerit, joiden oli täytyttävä materiaalia valittaessa. Ensimmäisen kriteerin mukaan haastateltavien oli oltava julkisuuden henkilöitä. Jos haastateltavat olisivat tavallisia ihmisiä, kuten esimerkiksi *The Oprah Winfrey Showssa*, haastattelijan ja haastateltavan välillä olisi liian suuri kontekstiin perustuva valtaero, jolla saattaisi olla vaikutusta tutkimustulokseen. Siispä haastateltavat henkilöt materiaalissani ovat pääasiassa näyttelijöitä ja laulajia sekä muita mediavaikuttajia.

Toisen kriteerin mukaan haastattelun oli tapahduttava kahden kesken, sillä keskusteluanalyysin (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974) mukaan useamman kuin kahden ihmisen välisessä keskustelussa on yleistä, että vuoronvaihtojärjestys hämärtyy ja keskeytyksiä sekä päällekkäisyyksiä tapahtuu lähes poikkeuksetta. Siksi en ottanut materiaaliini mukaan keskusteluohjelmia, joissa haastateltavia tai haastattelijoita on useampia kuin yksi. Eräänlaisena poikkeuksena tässä on *Conan*-keskusteluohjelma, jossa Conan O'Brienin ohella haastatteluja veti koomikko Andy Richter, mutta tutkimusmateriaaliksi valitsemisani haastatteluissa hän ei juuri osallistu haastatteluun satunnaista kommentointia lukuun ottamatta, mikä oli helppo jättää analyysin ulkopuolelle. Haastattelut eivät myöskään saaneet tapahtua minkäänlaisen sivuaktiviteetin aikana, sillä ulkopuoliset häiriötekijät voivat myös vaikuttaa keskustelun kulkuun ja täten keskeyttämisiin sekä päällekkäisyyksiin, joten keskusteluohjelmat kuten *Hot Ones* eivät sopineet kriteereihini.

Koska kustakin keskusteluohjelmasta valittiin kaksi haastattelua ja useat tutkimani tv-juontajat ovat juontaneet useampia ohjelmia vuosien aikana, kolmannen kriteerin mukaan kunkin juontajan kummankin haastattelun oli oltava peräisin samasta keskusteluohjelmasta. Syy tähän on se, että halusin pitää materiaalin mahdollisimman ajankohtaisena, sillä esimerkiksi 30 vuotta sitten julkaistuissa haastatteluissa saattaa olla läsnä senhetkisille kulttuuri- ja yhteiskuntanormeille ominaisia piirteitä, jotka voivat vaikuttaa keskustelun etenemiseen sekä päällekkäisyyksiin.

Neljännän kriteerin mukaan kunkin haastattelun oli oltava pituudeltaan vähintään 10 minuuttia ja enintään 25 minuuttia pitkä. Tämän kriteerin avulla varmistin itselleni

mahdollisimman paljon dataa kuitenkaan kuormittamatta itseäni liikaa työmäärän takia. Materiaalia oli täten myös helpompi karsia, koska useimmiten keskusteluohjelmien haastattelut kestävät hyvinkin lyhyen aikaa, sillä lyhyeen lähetysaikaan on mahduttava useita, viihdyttäviä osioita, joista yksittäisen julkisuuden henkilön haastattelu on vain yksi pala. Ei siis ole epätavallista, että tällainen haastattelu kestää vain noin viitisen minuuttia ja saattaa sisältää jonkinlaisia sivuaktiviteetteja, jolloin haastattelu ei sovellu kriteereihini.

Viides ja viimeinen kriteeri edellytti, että kunkin haastattelun oli löydyttävä niitä tuottaneiden ohjelmien tai tuotantoyhtiöiden vahvistetuilta YouTube-kanavilta. Luonnollisesti tällä mahdollistan, että materiaali on aitoa, laadukasta ja mahdollisimman vähän editoitua. Tällä vältän myös tekijänoikeusrikkomukset, sillä YouTubessa on tavallista, että siviilikäyttäjät lataavat sinne kokonaisia elokuvia tai televisio-ohjelmien jaksoja, joita on editoitu hiukan tekijänoikeusloukkauksien välttämiseksi. Pysin välttämään tällaisia videoita, vaikka ne muutoin olisivatkin sopineet kriteereihini ja kiinnostaneet minua.

Selkeitä ja onnistuneita keskeytyksiä tapahtui 89 kertaa, joista 49 (55.1 %) tapahtui miesten aloitteesta ja 40 (44.9 %) naisten aloitteesta. Miehet keskeyttivät tungettelevasti 24 kertaa ja yhteistoiminnallisesti 25 kertaa, kun taas naiset keskeyttivät tungettelevasti 18 kertaa ja yhteistoiminnallisesti 22 kertaa. Näistä 89 keskeytyksestä 52 (58.4 %) tapahtui juontajan toimesta ja 37 (41.6 %) haastateltavan toimesta. Epäonnistuneita keskeytyksiä tapahtui yhteensä 15 kertaa, joista 11 naisten aloitteesta ja neljä miesten aloitteesta.

Ensimmäinen hypoteesini, jonka mukaan miehet keskeyttäisivät tungettelevasti enemmän kuin naiset ja että he keskeyttäisivät naisia enemmän kuin toisia miehiä, toteutui osittain. Aiemmat tutkimustulokset, joiden mukaan miehet keskeyttävät enemmän (esim. Zimmerman & West 1975) ja että naiset käyttävät enemmän yhteistoiminnallista kieltä (esim. Hannah & Murachver 2007), saivat tukea tässä tutkimuksessa. On kuitenkin mainittava, että erot miesten keskeytystyypeissä olivat minimaaliset, mikä ei tue aiempaa tutkimustulosta siitä, että miesten kielellä on tapana olla dominoivampaa (esim. Leaper & Ayres 2007).

Toinen hypoteesini, jonka mukaan naisia keskeytettäisiin onnistuneesti enemmän kuin miehiä, sai ristiriitaista tukea. Miehiä keskeytettiin hieman enemmän kuin naisia, ja keskeyttäjäistä hieman suurempi lukumäärä oli toisia miehiä. Tämä on ristiriidassa aiempien tutkimustulosten kanssa, joiden mukaan samaan sukupuoleen kohdistuvia keskeytyksiä tapahtuu vähemmän kuin eri sukupuoleen kohdistuvia (esim. Kennedy & Camden 1983). Naiset sen sijaan tulivat keskeytetyksi miesten osalta enemmän kuin toisten naisten, joka taas tukee näitä aiempia löydöksiä. Mainittakoon kuitenkin, että erot sukupuolten välillä olivat hyvin pieniä.

Kolmas hypoteesini, jonka mukaan korkeammassa asemassa oleva keskustelukumppani (tässä juontaja) keskeyttäisi enemmän sukupuoleen katsomatta, sai selkeää tukea. Juontajat keskeyttivät huomattavasti useammin kuin heidän vieraansa, mikä tukee myös aiempia tutkimustuloksia siitä, että sosiaalisesti korkeammassa valta-asemassa oleva keskustelukumppani keskeyttää enemmän (esim. Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz 1985; Youngquist 2009). Mielenkiintoinen löydös oli myös se, että juontajien keskeytyksistä suurin osa oli yhteistoiminnallisia, kun taas vieraat keskeyttivät hieman enemmän tungettelevasti kuin yhteistoiminnallisesti. Tämä löydös näyttäisi olevan melko ristiriitainen, sillä esim. Westin ja Zimmermanin (1977) tutkimuksessa vanhemmat puhuivat lastensa päälle lähes poikkeuksetta, kun taas esim. Plugin et al. (2022) tutkimuksessa sekä lääkärit että potilaat keskeyttivät toisiaan, mutta valtaosa keskeytyksistä oli yhteistoiminnallisia. On huomautettava, että West ja Zimmerman (1977) eivät tutkineet keskeytysten tyyppisiä, mutta koska tutkimuksessa löydetyistä keskeytyksistä 86% tapahtui vanhempien aloitteesta ja loput 14% lasten aloitteesta (yleensä saadakseen vanhemman huomion), voitaneen olettaa, että vanhempien keskeyttäminen on ollut ainakin jossain määrin tungettelevaa.

Ensimmäinen tutkimuskysymykseni käsitteli sukupuolen roolia tungettelevissa ja yhteistoiminnallisissa keskeytyksissä. Miehet keskeyttivät lähes yhtä paljon tungettelevasti ja yhteistoiminnallisesti, mikä ei juuri tue aiempaa tutkimusta siitä, että miehet suosivat dominoivampaa kieltä (esim. Lakoff 1975; Leaper & Ayres 2007). Naisten käyttämä kieli taas oli yhteistoiminnallisempaa, mikä näkyi useampina yhteistoiminnallisina keskeytyksinä sekä yleisenä myötäilyinä ja keskusteluun reagoimisena, mikä sekin tukee aiempaa tutkimustulosta (esim. Maltz & Borker 1982).

Toinen tutkimuskysymykseni käsitteli sukupuolen roolia onnistuneissa ja epäonnistuneissa keskeytyksissä. Tutkimuksessa kävi ilmi, että vaikka miehet keskeyttivät hieman enemmän kuin naiset, mikä tukee aiempia väitteitä (esim. Zimmerman & West 1974), sukupuolella ei ollut kovinkaan merkittävää roolia keskeytyksissä yleisesti. Sukupuolierot olivat kuitenkin merkittävät epäonnistuneissa keskeytyksissä, sillä epäonnistuneita keskeytysyrityksiä ilmeni 15 kertaa, joista 11 (73.3 %) oli naisten aloitteesta ja neljä (26.7 %) miesten aloitteesta. Naiset myös ilmaisivat puheenvuorostaan luopumista selkeämmin kuin miehet. Selkeää eroa ei löytynyt siitä, kumpaanko sukupuoleen nämä epäonnistuneet yritykset kohdistuivat enemmän. Epäonnistuneet yritykset näyttivät olevan enemmän sidoksissa keskustelukumppanin puheliaisuuteen ja yleiseen persoonallisuuteen, sillä epäonnistuneet

yritykset näyttivät tapahtuvan enemmän silloin, kun keskustelukumppani oli hyvin energinen ja puhelias.

Kolmas tutkimuskysymyksenäni käsitteli sukupuolen roolia juontajan ja haastateltavan välisissä keskeytyksissä. Sukupuolella ei näyttänyt olevan merkittävää roolia, sillä juontaja keskeytti vierastaan todennäköisemmin ja useammin sukupuoleen katsomatta. Miespuoliset juontajat kuitenkin keskeyttivät huomattavasti useammin; he keskeyttivät 32 kertaa, kun taas naisjuontajat keskeyttivät 20 kertaa. Sukupuoliero oli pienempi vieraiden välillä, sillä miesvieraat keskeyttivät 17 kertaa ja naisvieraat 22 kertaa. Löydökset tukevat aiempia tuloksia siitä, että korkeammassa asemassa olevalla keskustelukumppanilla on tapana keskeyttää enemmän sukupuoleen katsomatta (esim. Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz 1985). Koska miehet nauttivat useammin korkeammasta asemasta kuin naiset (Youngquist 2009), miessukupuoli on yllämainittuun valta-asetelmiin liittyvissä tutkimuskonteksteissa ja siten mahdollisesti myös keskeyttämiseen liittyvässä tutkimuksessa.

Tutkimustulokset paljastavat, että sukupuolta enemmän keskustelukumppaneiden status, persoonallisuus sekä henkilökohtaiset suhteet tulisi ottaa huomioon keskeyttämistä ja päällekkäisyyksiä tutkittaessa. Tutkimuksessa huomattiin, että hiljainen ja rauhallinen vieras (esimerkiksi Corey Taylor) keskeytti vähemmän kuin energinen ja kovaääninen vieras (esimerkiksi Mila Kunis), mikä lienee ennalta-arvattavaa. Myös juontajien keskustelutyylillä oli merkitystä, sillä juontaja, jolle on ominaista viedä keskustelua eteenpäin (esimerkiksi Larry King), keskeytti todennäköisemmin kuin juontaja, jonka juontotyylillä oli lähempänä rentoa keskustelua (esimerkiksi Sherri Shepherd).

Myös ikäerolla näytti olevan jonkinlainen rooli, sillä silloin, kun keskustelijoiden välinen ikäero oli huomattavan suuri, vanhemmalla osapuolella oli tapana keskeyttää, erityisesti tungettelevasti (esimerkiksi Cher), kun taas nuorempi osapuoli keskeytti vähemmän mutta ilmaisi kiinnostustaan keskusteluun. Keskusteluissa, joissa keskustelijoiden ikäero oli pienempi, tämä ero ei ollut niin huomattava.

Tutkimuksesta saadut tulokset ovat mielenkiintoisia sekä menneen että tulevan tutkimuksen kannalta, sillä tutkimustulosten perusteella voidaan olettaa, että sukupuoli ei yksin vaikuta ihmisten väliseen keskusteludynamiikkaan, vaan siihen vaikuttavat useat yhteiskunnalliset ja sosiaaliset tekijät, joihin sukupuoli on kietoutunut.