

Men compete, women collaborate

A study on collaborative vs. competitive communication styles in
mixed-sex conversations

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Primary material

American TV show, *Dr.Phil*

First episode, May 12th , 2008 : 40minutes

Second episode, Choose Money? or Marriage? May 5th , 2008 : 40minutes

Third episode, November 6th , 2007: 40minutes

Secondary material

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1. Introduction

People spend a large part of their lives interacting with each other. They do so in small groups, in informal conversations with friends, in meeting with co-workers, and in many other contexts. In any relationship, no matter the type, communication is central and therefore virtually unavoidable. Human beings are constantly involved in communication processes with others. We are engaged in these communication processes in areas of life: at home, in school, in the community, at work, and beyond. It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur. The ability to make the appropriate communicative choices in a certain context is part of a person's communicative competence. Different kinds or style of communicative competence can occur and humans use their communicative strategies slightly differently for various reasons. One such major, hypothetical reason could be gender: men and women are sometimes reported to use slightly different styles in communicating with others. Differences in communicative style may ultimately lead to miscommunication.

The study of communication between the genders is a central area and has been a topic of interest for sometime. One of the important issues between males and females is how they use their communication skills to interact with one another. Men and women, it is reported, typically use different discourse strategies in communication; in general, women's linguistic behavior seems to suffer compared to men's. The most common beliefs about gender differences in communication are that men are direct in how they communicate, that they are more authoritative and forceful, while women are more polite, more gentle and more emotional.

Tannen points out in the publication *You just don't Understand* (1992) that women use conversation and communication to build relationships and for purposes of cooperation and collaboration. Men, on the other hand, use conversation and communication to show dominance, to protect themselves from others and generally seem to view conversation as a contest, a struggle, in order to preserve independence and avoid failure (1992:24-25).

In conversation many strategies are used. Depending on how these strategies are used by participants during a conversation it is shown whether they are cooperative or competitive.

There are some strategies which have a more central function than others in conversation, and these are minimal responses, interruptions and overlaps.

1.1 Aim

The aim of the present investigation is to see if there are any similarities and differences between male speakers and female speakers in mixed-gender conversations with a special focus on the use of so-called collaborative communication styles and competitive communications styles. Specific attention is placed on three particular strategies: minimal responses, interruptions and overlaps.

1.2 Material

The primary material in this investigation consists of episodes from an American TV show, *Dr. Phil*. This is a talk show, which is named after the host Dr. Phil himself. The talk show deals mostly with family matters and relationships issues, with people coming to the show to solve their problems and to get advice from Dr.Phil.

Three episodes have been analyzed from *Dr.Phil*. The reason why these episodes have been selected is because both genders participate in conversation, which creates a mixed-sex conversation and the language is authentic which makes the conversation more natural. All episodes have been chosen randomly. The first episode is from May 12th, 2008, called Choose Money?, or Marriage? In the first episode there are four guests who participate including the host. These are two couples, two women and two men. The men are brothers. The second episode is from May 5th, 2008. This episode was not named. The participants in the second episode are two women, a mother, and an ex-wife and a man who is the ex-husband. The host takes part in the second episode also. The third episode is from November 6th, 2007. It was not named. The guests are two women and a man. The participants are a mother-in-law, her son and his wife.

Each episode is 40 minutes long, without the commercial breaks and 60 minutes long including the commercial breaks. The focus is on the 40 minute discussions. The total time of these three episodes without commercials is 120 minutes. All episodes are taken from the Internet site *Youtube* and the language used in this TV show is authentic and non-scripted.

1.3 Method

This study analyses which gender use a collaborative communication style or a competitive communication style in mixed-sex conversation. This study also analyses three specific strategies, namely minimal responses, interruptions and overlaps. These strategies will help create a more detailed understanding of collaborative communication and competitive communication in mixed-sex conversation. The primary material will be watched, listened to and analyzed very carefully to see which communication style males and females use in mixed-sex conversation.

2. Theoretical background

In the following section some central areas to conversation analysis will be presented. It begins with two general sections about communication and conversation. It continues to present two different communication styles, collaborative communication style and competitive communication style and three specific strategies are also presented, minimal responses, interruptions and overlaps. The last two sections in the theoretical background are about female speakers and male speakers.

2.1 Communication

According to Yule communication is a learned skill. Most people are born with the physical ability to talk, but we must learn to speak well and communicate effectively. Some of the key components for communication are sound, speaking and language. Speaking, listening, and our ability to understand verbal and nonverbal meanings are skills we develop in various ways. We learn basic communication skills by observing other people and modeling our behaviors based on what we see. We also are taught some communication skills directly through education and by practicing those skills and having them evaluated.

As already mentioned, there are different ways of communication, we can communicate both in a verbal and a non-verbal way. Verbal communication is one way for people to communicate face-to-face, i.e. communicating your thoughts through words. Verbal communication can be divided into two types based on how we communicate, namely monologues and dialogues. By communicating with others through monologues and

dialogues we create an interaction, which takes us a step further and develops into a conversation. The other way we can communicate is by using non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, body posture and motions, all of which are included in body language. Other types of non-verbal communication are symbols, signs, writing and even playing instruments. Non-verbal communication can create and transfer equal powerful meaning as verbal communication (Yule,2006).

2.2. Conversation

Conversation is a natural part of our lives, but that many people are perhaps not conscious of what happens within it. People sometimes use the term conversation to mean any spoken encounter or interaction and in everyday life people can even refer the term conversation as chat which is more informal type of spoken interaction. The reason why people assume and see conversation as very informal on the whole is because what is talked about is restricted to personal things rather than facts. In brief, conversation may be characterized as an informal speech event but conversation can also occur in formal speech. A debate, for example, is a formal speech event and highly task-oriented. As we can see, it is hard to put a clear definition on what conversation really is and how we should handle it (Nolasco, 1987).

Oreström discusses the difficulty to give a brief, simple and clear definition of conversation. He argues that the reason for this complexity can depend on the fact that conversation is seen as a speech event, which involves a mutual exchange of information, thoughts, ideas and emotions. Oreström discusses many researchers' definitions of conversation and one of them is Yngve (1970) who according to Oreström Yngve notes that, "the passing" of the turn from one party to another is nearly the most obvious aspect of conversation"(Oreström,1983: 22). To create a good conversation it is important to think about the basic rule that one party talks at a time and by using this rule both speakers' show respect and avoid dominance (1983).

Further, Nolasco continues to point out in his book *Conversation* (1987) that the purpose of conversation includes the exchange of information; the creation and maintenance of social relationships, such as friendship, the negotiation of status and social roles, as well as deciding on and carrying out joint actions. This therefore shows that conversation has many functions, but its primary purpose in our own language is social. Even if conversation is used in

everyday life we have to consider, however, that conversation follows certain rules and when we look at normal conversation we notice certain things. The things we become aware of are that, usually, only one person speaks at a time, the speakers change, and the length of any contribution varies. Other things, which are noticeable in conversation, are that there are techniques for allowing the other participant to speak, and that neither the content nor the amount of what we say is specified in advance.

An example of a normal conversation is given in the first example. Both participants A and B use the turn-taking strategy.

Example (1):

A: *Hi, Jane*

B: *Hi*

A: *Could I borrow your bike, please?*

B: *Yes, it's in the garage.*

A: *Thanks very much.*

According to Nolasco (1987), there are different strategies in conversational interaction and some of these are turn-taking, questions, minimal responses and interruptions. Some of these strategies are used in this particular example and the first strategy which is used in the example is turn-taking, it often refers to one speaker speak at a time and speaker change recurs. Both speakers follow each other in an orderly fashion, with no gap and no overlap between the speakers. There are two types of turn-allocation techniques, the first one is, the current-speaker selects the next-speaker and the second one were the next turn is allocated by self-selection.

Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) present a model of turn-taking and this model was devised to analyse conversation. Sacks et al observe that “overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time”(1974:700) and “ transitions, from one turn to a next with no gap and no overlap are common”(1974:700). Turns are typically completed at the end of the sentence and these possible completion points are called transition relevance places. Transition relevance places (TRP) are, points at which another speaker may gain the floor, that is, the expected end of the current speaker's turn. At each transition relevance place the speaker can either continue, extending the current turn, or someone else can speak, beginning a new turn. While a speaker

is taking a turn s/he is said to hold the floor. According to all three researchers, evidence for transition relevance places is found in the fact that conversation involves the smooth transition from one speaker to another with little or no time lapse intervening (1974).

Another strategy Nolasco (1987) points out, which is used in the example, is questions; the current speaker in a conversation may select the next speaker by asking them a question or addressing them by name. Questions and answer are linked together in conversation because questions demand a response from the receiver. There are different functions of questions; they can have a powerful or a powerless function. The reason why questions can be seen as powerful is because they give the speaker the power to elicit a response from the other participant, and if the question is used to keep conversation going it is relatively powerless.

Minimal responses is a strategy which is used by the listeners in the conversation and they are forms such as *yeah*, *right* or *mhm*. Minimal responses can also be given in non-verbal speech by nodding, smiling and other types of body language. Minimal responses are a way of indicating the listener's positive attention to the current speaker by showing support and interest for the speaker's topic. There is also a form called delayed minimal responses. Listener uses the same forms *yeah*, *right* or *mhm*, but this time they signals a lack interest and a lack of support for the speaker's topic.

Interruption is also one of the strategies that is used in conversation. Interruption occurs when the next speaker begins to speak while the current speaker is still speaking. Interruption breaks the balance of the conversational model, because next speaker makes the interruption at a non-completed sentence and prevent the current speaker from finishing her or his turn. Interruption seems to function as a way of controlling the topic or even change the topic and the speaker who interrupts can be seen as the speaker who tends to dominate one Nolasco, 1987).

This example shows how interruption is made in a conversation. The vertical line shows when the interruption occurs in the conversation between participant A and participant B. This simple exchange shows also how complex conversation can be.

Example (2)

A: *I think* | *that*

B: *Have you seen that move?*

Yule discusses in his book *The study of language* (2006) the philosopher Grice's important factor for conversation, which is the co-operative principle. According to Yule (2006), Grice (1975) defines this term in the following way: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Yule, 2006:129). Supporting this principle, there are four maxims, which are often called the Grice maxims. Yule presents these maxims in the following way:

The **quantity** maxim: Make your contribution as informative as required, but not more, or less, than is required.

The **quality** maxim: Do not say that which you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence.

The **relation** maxim: Be relevant.

The **manner** maxim: Be clear, brief and orderly (Yule, 2006: 130).

2.2.1 Collaborative communication

According to Coates (2004), people in a collaborative discussion build off of each others' good ideas, working together to create something good and this is done by supporting other speakers and using language in a way that emphasizes their solidarity with the other participant. The collaborative style assumes all participants are working together and helping each other during the conversation. People who use the collaborative style make sure other participants do not feel outside or useless, so even the people whose ideas were not used will feel that their ideas were considered fairly as everybody took the time to understand their point. When speakers choose to establish a collaborative floor rather than a single one-at-a-time floor, they are choosing to do friendship and intimacy Coates (2004).

Coates points out a significant part of a collaborative floor which is the use of minimal responses. These brief utterances like *yeah*, *mhm*, *that's right*, occur in all forms of talk, but they occur more frequently in collaborative floors. The reason why it occurs more in collaborative floors is because once the floor is constructed as occupied by all speakers at all

times, speakers have an obligation to signal their continued presence in it. So, minimal responses signal that speakers are present and involved (1996).

The example below will show how minimal responses occur in collaborative conversation. Minimal responses are marked with a vertical line and the vertical line shows even when minimal responses are given during the conversation. Participant B and C give minimal responses during the conversation and, this shows support to the current speaker and signals that other speakers are present and involved.

Example (3)

A: *You look at these massive concrete council estates....*

A: *they wouldn't dream of building now* *but at least they tried.*

B: *mhm* | *mhm* |

C: *mhm* |

This example is not taken from Coates book but from another book which also discusses the function of minimal responses in collaborative conversation (Johnson, 1997: 110).

Johnson discusses in his book *Language and Masculinity* (1996) another significant strategy which forms part of a collaborative floor, namely overlap. Overlap occurs mostly in all-female talk and when it occurs much of it is clearly supportive. Collaborative communication typically involves more overlapping speech, shorter turns and with no gaps when the speakers change turns. When collaborative style is used in conversation the floor is a shared space and therefore what is said is construed as being the voice of the group rather than of the individual. This emphasis on the connection between the speakers makes the collaborative floor a powerful way of doing friendship (1997).

Tannen demonstrates that women's language style is largely based on the rehearsed role of many women to build relationships through language and it means that women are more collaborative in their communication tendencies. Women use the collaborative style more because they prefer giving support rather than showing status, they want to compromise rather than make conflict. The reason why women use a collaborative style is because they like to create more intimacy and show that all people are the same and are feeling equally close to each other (1992).

2.2.2 Competitive communication

Tannen discusses in her book *You Just Don't Understand*, (1992) that competitiveness has been stereotypically associated with masculinity, meaning men are more competitive in their communication tendencies. This is because competition is an important aspect of dominant versions of masculinity. The characteristics of competitive style are when one seeks fulfillment and involvement with others through asymmetric or competitive relationships, with the key goals of independence, physical action, problem solving, personal competence, and dominance (1996).

According to Coates a competitive style could be explained as a conversation which includes contests, battles and gladiatorial. The reason why men are connected to the competitive style is because they mostly like to use monologues, one-at-a time floor-holding patterns, and in this way they can play the expert in the conversation. Monologues give individual speakers advantaged access to an uninterrupted floor and these results in a more gladiatorial style of talk. Men's competitive style is a different way of achieving solidarity and men can cooperate closely in certain interaction rituals but even though some of these rituals are highly competitive. Coates continues to discuss about competitive style and demonstrates this style of use is connected with men, by this they are stressing their own individuality and emphasizing the hierarchical relationship that they enter into with other people (2004).

Interruption is a strategy, which is connected to the competitive style, and it is seen as very assertive and more masculine. Competitive interruptions occur when one speaker attempts to take the floor by making his or her own remarks a higher priority over the main speaker's speech when the main speaker intends to continue. Competitive interruptions are typically high in pitch and amplitude and competitive interruptions signals, speakers often compete to gain control and dominance in conversation. Especially in mixed-gender conversation men tend to interrupt women and this can be seen as a violation of the current speaker's turn at talk, especially of their right to speak. Interruptions are made because men are more likely to take the dominant role in the conversation. Men would like to compete for the right to speak in order to control the topic of conversations. For example, men would make a louder voice to compete against the current speaker. In this way women would be pushed to a listening role when men seem to be competing for the floor (Johnson, 1997).

This example illustrates how an interruption occurs in a conversation between two participants. Current speaker A, who is a young female, begins to speak and the next speaker B, who is a male, interrupts at the middle of the sentence and the vertical line shows when the interruptions occur.

Example (4)

A: *It's just- hmmm*

It's just to say the one who speaks, it is just that you-you
B: *But you have to speak very slowly, right? It has to be very clear.*

(Johnson,1997: 113)

2.3 Factors which influence the use of collaborative and competitive style

Three central strategies are presented and discussed in the three sections below. Each strategy has a very important roll either in collaborative communication or in competitive communication. The first strategy is minimal responses, seen as a cooperative signal in a conversation; the second is interruption, which is connected to the competitiveness in conversation; and the last one is overlaps. Overlaps can be associated with both the collaborative communication style and the competitive communication style, as there are cooperative overlaps and uncooperative overlaps. To make it even clearer, examples are provided for each strategy.

2.3.1 Minimal responses and backchannel items

Minimal responses can also be referred to as back-channel responses and both phenomena have the same function when they are used as verbal or non-verbal speech.

The term minimal responses are prevalently used in research about language and gender. Minimal responses are a support that listeners give to speakers by verbal or non-verbal speech. These are forms such as *mm*, *mhm*, *yeah*, *I agree*, *right*, *nodding*, *smiling* and body language, which are uttered by a listener during a speech event to signal a certain level of engagement with the speaker. They indicate that the listener is paying attention and is interested in hearing more. A significant part of a collaborative floor is the use of minimal responses. Minimal responses are mostly used by women and are more frequent in collaborative floors than in singly developed floors. This is because once the floor is occupied by all speakers at all time, speakers have an obligation to signal their continued presence in, and acceptance of, the shared floor. So, minimal responses signal in collaborative floors that speakers are present and involved. These forms of minimal responses have very important and very different functions in two different floors. When talk is more formal, which means more like public talk and a singly developed floor is established, then minimal responses say: *I am listening*, *I thus acknowledge your right to hold the floor* and *I will wait for my turn*. When talk is more informal, for example between friends in private and a collaborative floor is established, then minimal responses say: *I am here*, *this is my floor too* and *I am participating in the shared construction of talk* (Coates, 1996)

This example shows when minimal responses occur in a collaborative floor. Four participants take place in a conversation and all are active and minimal responses play a significant role in the collaborative floor and of the maintenance of the collaborative floor. Minimal responses are shown by a vertical line.

Example (5)

A: *and I just suddenly have seen how awful he is and....*

A: *... horrible*

B: *yeah*

C: *yeah*

D: *yeah*

(Coates, 1996 : 145)

Stenström discusses the phenomenon of back-channel and says, in spoken interaction requires active participation by both parties in a two-party dialogue. This means that the listener has to be active and not provide only non-verbal back-channels, such as nodding smiling and eye-glancing but also some kind of oral back-channels. Back-channels reflect enthusiasm and indignation, but they can also reflect a lack of interest. Stenström points out some verbal back-channels like *ah, mhm, sure, right and really* and also mentions the most frequent non-verbal back-channel which is laughter (1994).

The example below will illustrate how laughter occurs as back-channel in a conversation. All three participants are women and when the laughter takes place it is shown within parentheses.

Example (6)

A: ... *and I found myself looking into this grey moustached face*

b,c : (--- *laugh*)

A: *absolutely shapeless women with – you know no lips on the edge of her mouth.*

b,c: (---*laugh*)

Both participants B and C laugh and this shows that they are involved in the conversation. They are listening to the current speaker A and show support and interest by laughing.

Coates also discusses the differences in minimal responses between women and men and agrees that women make greater use of minimal responses to indicate support for the speaker and that is why listening is highly valued by women. Further, Coates mentions that men also use minimal responses but in a different form, which is called delayed minimal responses. Men use delayed minimal responses such as, *mhm* and *yeah* and their function is to signal a lack of understanding or lack of interest in what the current speaker is saying. In mixed-sex conversation men tend to use delayed minimal responses often and this could be the reasons why women tend to speak less in mixed conversation. Women do not feel that men as listeners give active support to the current speaker. Coates thinks that these differences in minimal responses between women and men occur because women tend to speak and hear a

language of connection and intimacy, whereas men speak and hear a language of status and independence (Coates, 2004).

2.3.2 Interruptions

Coates discusses the definition of interruption and thinks interruption can be seen as a situation in which the next speaker begins to speak while the current speaker is still speaking. Interruption breaks the symmetry of the conversational model and with this it prevents the first speaker from finishing his/her turn. Interruptions are violations of the turn-taking rules of conversation and are described as uncooperative. Mostly in mix-sex conversations, men are more likely to interrupt women than women are to interrupt men. As been mentioned before, men usually use a competitive style, and therefore, interruptions are associated with competitiveness, seen as aggressive, dominant and as a way of getting the floor. Women on the other hand are concerned not to violate the man's turn, but wait until he is finished (Coates, 2004).

This example shows how men's use of this strategy can make it difficult for women to get their points across in mixed-sex conversation. Two participants take part where A is a male speaker and B is a female speaker. The vertical line shows when the interruption is made and when the male speaker disrupts the female speaker at a non-completed sentence.

Example (7)

A: *what has your section done in this area for instance?*

B: *well we have begun thinking about it, we've been holding regular*

B: *review* | *sessions on –*

A: | *it'll take a lot more than that I can tell you, this is a*

A: *serious matter*

(Coates, 2004: 115)

According to Oreström interruption has definitely a negative connotation. Interruption is associated with an unplanned stop, hindrance, or disturbance caused by another speaker or an outside event. He also argues that there are two factors which seem to be central for interruption: the first factor is, if two or more people talk at once and the second factor is, if the new speaker starts talking before the ongoing speaker has reached a point of completion. According to Orestörm, Clancy (1972) distinguishes between two types of interruptions: “those which cause broken-off, unfinished sentences on the part of the previous speaker and

those in which the previous speaker completes his sentence while the new speaker is already beginning his” (Oreström,1983:136). Orestörm also presents how Clancy (1972) distinguishes between four types of speaker-switch, non-fluency, three of which are called interruptions.

1. Simple interruption; occurs in simultaneous speech, ongoing speaker’s utterances is incomplete, new speaker takes the floor.
2. Butting-in interruption; occurs in simultaneous speech, new speaker’s utterance is left incomplete, no floor-talking.
3. Silent interruption; no simultaneous speech, ongoing speaker’s utterance is incomplete, new speaker takes the floor (Oreström,1983: 136).

Tannen also discusses the strategy of interruptions and how it affects the speakers in a conversation. Tannen points out that interruptions are not a mechanical category it is matter of individual habits and expectations. To decide whether a speaker is violating another speaker’s rights, one has to know very much about both speakers, the situation and most importantly what the context is about. All these factors influence whether or not someone’s speaking rights have been violated and how significant the violation is. Interruption is a complex strategy and can act both as a collaborative and competitive style depending on the relationship between the speakers and the topic. Many people can feel that a host has the right to interrupt, like offering food to the guests without anyone feeling violated. But this is not to say that any time is the right time to interrupt to offer food. If the host habitually interrupts it might seem like a violation of rights or the expression of mischievous motives. How an interruption affects a person depends on how the person grew up at home and which conversation style is mostly used (Tannen, 1992).

2.3.3 Overlaps

Overlapping speech is a difficult strategy to define, because it can be seen as both a cooperative strategy and a competitive strategy. When all participants jointly occupy the floor simultaneously, then overlapping speech has a positive effect in collaborative floor. But

where a one-at-a-time floor is operating, any overlap is potentially a violation of the current speaker's turn at talk, specifically of their right to speak. So, in a one-at-a-time floor, overlap will be construed as interruption and the next speaker trying to take the floor (Jonhson, 1997).

According to Tannen some people practice cooperative overlapping in speech, while others refuse to participate until given specific time to speak. Tannen's definition of overlap is, when a second speaker begins speaking at what could be a transition-relevant place such as the end of a clause. This means overlaps do not occur at the middle of a sentence but rather at the end of the sentence, when the next speaker overlaps the current speaker's last word or begins to talk immediately after the current speaker, without any pauses. Some overlaps are considered cooperative because usually they will include just a few words of encouragement or elaboration on the topic and not a full sentence about a different subject.

Tannen defines the two types of people as high involvement and high considerateness speakers, which overlapping speech shows different effect. High involvement speakers give priority in a conversation to expressing enthusiastic support even if it involves simultaneous speech, while high considerateness speakers are more concerned with being considerate of others. They prefer not to impose on the conversation as a whole or on specific comments of another conversant (1992).

This example will illustrate when three high involvement speakers takes part in a conversation and shows successful cooperative overlapping. Participant A and C are two male and brothers, participant C is a female, the interviewer. The vertical lines shows when overlaps occur and where second speaker begins to speak without leaving any perceptible pause.

Example (8)

A: *I think it's basically done damage to children. That what good it's done is outweighed by the damage*

B: *Did you two grow up with television?*

C: *Very little. We had a TV in the Quonest-*

B: *How old were you when your parents got it?*

A: We
*had a TV, but we didn't watch it all the time. We were very young. I was four when my
 parents got a TV. (Tannen, 1992 : 197)*

This example shows many overlapping speech but yet the speakers show no evidence of discomfort or annoyance. All three speakers take turns that latch onto or intrude into others' turn. This example also show why high involvement speakers don't mind being overlapped. In the example the interviewer asks a question *how old were you when your parents got it?* The participant B doesn't answer the question right away and continues to speak about what he was going to say, before he answered the question. It does not mean that participant B takes it in a negative way instead he finishes participant C's statements and then answers the question. This shows that the overlaps are cooperative because it do not change the topic but elaborate on it.

In the next example one high involvement speaker and one high considerateness speaker will take place in a conversation. Participant A is high considerateness speaker and participant B is high involvement speaker. The vertical line will show when overlaps occur during the conversation.

Example (9)

A: *So, and this is the one that's Berkeley. This is the Berkeley sign for* | *Christmas.*
 B: | *Do you figure out*
those, those, um, correspondences? Or do-
 A: | /?/ |
 B: *when you learn the signs, does somebody tell you?*
 A: *Oh, you mean* | *watching it? Like---*
 B: | *Cause I can imagine knowing the sign, and not figure out that it had*
anything to do with the decorations.
 A: *No. Y-you know that it has to do with the decorations.*

(Tannen, 1992: 199)

This example shows a high considerateness speaker feels discomfort in his pauses, hesitations and repetitions when overlaps occur. High considerateness speakers are not seen overlapping speech as something supportive and takes it negatively because, they don't like to ask

questions or give comments when the other speaker speaks. When overlapping questions are asked to a high considerateness speaker, they tend to create disruptions and interruptions.

Coates discusses also about the definition of overlap and argues that overlaps are “instances of slight over-anticipation by the next speaker” (Coates, 2004:113). Instead of beginning speaking in the middle of the current speaker’s turn, next speaker begins to speak at the very end of current speaker’s turn, overlapping the last word. Over-anticipation does not necessarily force the first speaker to finish his/her turn (2004).

2.4 Female speakers

Each gender tends to operate by a different set of rules, when men and women come together in conversation, problems may arise, because the two genders are, in effect, speaking in different styles. Women generally tend to want connection with others, and to feel close through getting and giving confirmation, empathy and support in conversation. For women, an important part of life consists of an effort to develop and preserve intimacy. Intimacy is an important factor in a world of connection where individuals negotiate complex networks of friendship, minimize differences, try to reach agreement and avoid the appearances of dominance. Women tend to think of interactions in a non-hierarchical way, and they avoid the role of expert in conversation in order to minimize social distance between the participants. As mentioned before, minimal responses are one strategy female speaker use in conversation to give support and show solidarity between conversational participants and this shows why female speaker use the collaborative communication (Coates, 1996).

2.5 Male speakers

Coates argues in her book (*Men’s Talk*) in a man's world, conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand and prevent others from psychologically putting them down or pushing them around. Generally, then, conversation for men is like a contest, a struggle to preserve independence. It is believed that men do not talk to much, which is seen as strong and silent or they talk compulsively and competitively. Another important factor to show in conversation is status. Status is very important for men and this is connected to independence. Independence is key because a primary means of establishing status is to tell others what to do, and taking orders is a marker of low status.

Even though most of the time men use competitive communication in mix-sex conversation and all-male conversation, it can happen though men also choose sometimes collaborative communication. Men tend to use cooperative style where speakers know each other well, and have shared knowledge.

Further, Coates discusses it is difficult to know why men and women seem to have such different ways of communicating. Nevertheless, it is certain that such differences can lead to misunderstandings, tension and conflicts in relationships. One way to avoid this conflict is to understand that men and women use language differently. Knowing this, each partner will be more likely to interpret his or her partner's statements as a function of these gender differences rather than as personal attacks (2003).

3. Results and Analysis

In this section the results from all episodes will be discussed and analysed. To see which gender are more collaborative or competitive in mixed-sex conversation the focus have been on specific strategies, i.e. minimal responses, interruption and overlaps. The results from all three episodes will also be compared with earlier findings by other researchers. Examples from the primary material will illustrate the findings. In the case of the minimal responses, these are highlighted in bold in the examples.

This first table will illustrates the overall results for all three strategies from the three episodes, including the host Dr. Phil and the second table presents the overall results excluding the host Dr. Phil

Table 1. Overall results for all three strategies and including the host Dr. Phil

Episodes	Minimal responses		Interruptions		Overlaps	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
1. May 12 th ,2008	4	8	17	2	10	20
2. May 5 th ,2008	5	14	19	5	6	15
3. November 6 th , 2007	2	7	11	4	6	10
Totals:	11	29	47	11	22	45
Totals:	40		58		67	

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Table 2. Results for all three strategies but excluding the host Dr. Phil

Episodes	Minimal responses		Interruptions		Overlaps	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
1. May 12 th , 2008	4	8	11	2	8	20
2. May 5 th , 2008	5	14	13	5	3	15
3. November 6 th , 2007	2	7	9	4	4	10
Totals:	11	29	33	11	15	45
Totals:	40		44		60	

The overall results have been presented in two tables and both tables show two different results. The main reason why the overall results have been presented in this way is because we have to bear in mind that the host Dr. Phil has a central role in his TV show. It is important to be aware for Dr. Phil's interactions during the conversation because even if we know he is a man and the focus is on three different strategies in mixed-sex conversation, Dr. Phil affects the results for the male category. As we can see in these two tables, the categories for interruptions and overlaps change when Dr. Phil is included and excluded.

As we already have mentioned the researcher Tannen (1992) points out that many people think the host has the right to interrupt. The host can interrupt when he or she is offering food to the guests without making anyone feel violated and in this situation Dr. Phil may have the right to interrupt and use overlaps, which affects the results for men. He is the person who gives advice and tries to solve the issues the guests have and by using more interruptions and overlaps he asks questions, interrupts when something is not clear enough and explains how things can be done to overcome their issues. According to Tannen if the host habitually interrupts it might seem like a violation of rights or the expression of mischievous motives.

Next table will present only Dr. Phil's results for all three strategies in all episodes.

Table 3. Number of minimal responses, interruptions and overlaps used by Dr.Phil

Episodes	Minimal responses	Interruptions	Overlaps
1. May 12 th ,2008	0	8	2
2. May 5 th , 2008	0	6	3
3.November 6 th , 2008	0	3	2
Totals:	0	17	7

According to Coates (1996) minimal responses are used mostly by females. Minimal responses are used to show support and it indicates that the listener is paying attention to the current speaker. Dr. Phil did not use any kind of minimal responses in all three episodes even though he was listening and paying attention to the current speaker. This is one instance which shows that men use fewer minimal responses than women, but it does not always mean they do not listen or paying any attention in the conversation. Even though Dr. Phil does not use any minimal responses he does not use any delayed minimal responses either, which according to Coates is a form men use to signal a lack of understanding or a lack of interest. In this case Dr. Phil cannot signal a lack of understanding or a lack of interest, even if he does not use minimal responses, because he has to listen carefully and pay attention since after all he is the host and he is the one who will try to give advice and help to solve the issues.

Interruptions are used many times by Dr. Phil and as one person and the host he interrupts 8 times in episode 1, which is half of the result for men in table 2, were Dr. Phil is excluded. In episode 1, there are two men as guests and both men's results for interruptions are 11 times and this is the reason why one has to bear in mind that Dr. Phil is the host and has to be presented separately. If we compare just Dr. Phil's the results and the women's results or interruptions it is a clear that men use much more interruptions than women in mixed-sex conversation. According to Coates (2004), interruptions are associated with men and seen as competitiveness, aggressive, dominance and as a way of getting the floor. Coates also demonstrates that in order to decide whether a speaker is violating another speaker's rights by interrupting, one have to know a lot about the participants in the conversation and what the context is about.

Two examples will be given when Dr. Phil interrupts a female guest. Example (10) is taken from the second episode, May 5th, 2008, where two women and a man are guests. Yolanda is one of the female guests and the mother of Pierre. Amanda, who is ex-wife and Pierre, who is the ex-husband of Amanda. In the first example Dr. Phil is interrupting Yolanda and vertical lines show when the interruptions occur.

Example (10)

Yolanda: *I don't think she is trash at all, but what bothers me was the alcohol problem. You offered her treatment and*

Dr:Phil: *Ok, wait first answer the first part of the question. You have all attention to get rid of her, right?*

Yolanda: *No, if she had*

Dr.Phil: *You want her gone.* (Episode 2, May 5th,2008)

In the first interruption, Dr. Phil interrupts Yolanda while she is speaking and he is using a competitive style by suddenly cutting her off and wanting her to answer the first part of the question. He asks her a question and he expects a positive answer because he thinks he knows that Yolanda definitely wants to get rid of her daughter-in-law. Here he shows a dominance act because when Yolanda answers *No, if she had*, Dr.Phil interrupts her and insists that Yolanda wants her gone. Once again he plays the expert in the conversation and wants to prove that he is right. Johnson (1997) argued that men especially in mixed-sex conversation tend to interrupt women more to take the dominant role in the conversation. Men would like to compete for speaking right in order to control the topic of conversation. Another reason could also be that men like to play the expert during mixed-sex conversation, to show that they know more and once again to show their dominant side.

Example 11 is taken from the first episode, May 12th, 2008, when Dr.Phil interrupts a female participant. In this episode there are two couples, two male and two female. Kelly and Billy is the first couple and Marlow and Tim is the second couple. This example illustrates when Dr. Phil interrupts Kelly and the vertical lines show when interruptions occur in the conversation.

Example (11)

Dr. Phil: *Were you there and why are you in Tim's business?*

Kelly: *I was not in Tim business, I was*

Dr. Phil: *Wait a minute, is that true. Did you follow him or not?*

Kelly: *No, I was following the person he was with and*

Dr. Phil: *Do I look stupid to you. So, you were just following the person he was with and never saw him.*

Kelly: *No, because*

Dr. Phil: *Are you kidding me, do not lie.*

(Episode 1, May 12th,

2008)

Here are three competitive interruptions used by Dr. Phil. He interrupts Kelly in the middle of her sentences three times when she intends to continue and Dr. Phil takes the floor. Especially in the first and second interruptions Dr. Phil uses high pitch to dominate and takes control over the conversation. This is a very typical sign of been competitive during a conversation. Another thing which shows that Dr. Phil is dominant and likes to play the expert is that he does not give Kelly any chance to explain herself and at the end even says that she is not telling the truth. This is an aggressive act which is associated with men and competitiveness. As Johnson (1997) points out, men would use a louder voice to compete against the current speaker and in this way women would be pushed to a listening role when men seem to be competing for the floor.

When we look at Table 3 the results for overlaps show that Dr. Phil did not use as many as the interruptions, but the whole amount of overlaps for Dr. Phil is half of what all men have used in all episodes. It is important not to forget Dr. Phil's role in the show, that he is the host, which makes it more reasonable to understand why he uses more interruptions and overlaps than all the men and all women in the mixed-sex conversation.

This example is taken from episode 1, May 12th, 2008 and illustrates an overlapping speech between Dr. Phil and two female participants, Kelly and Marlow. The vertical lines show when they overlap each other during the conversation.

Example (12)

Dr. Phil: *You basically told us, I am communicator, I just step up and communicate if they cannot handle it, that is their problem.*

Kelly: *No, that is not what I said.*

Dr. Phil *Yes, that is what you said.*

Marlow: *She told me exactly the same thing*

Kelly: *No, I said that I made a tempt to communicate but got no response.*

Dr. Phil *Yes, but that is not what you said before.*

(Episode 1, May 12th, 2008)

Tannen (1992) discusses two types of people in terms of high involvement and high considerateness speakers, where overlapping speech has different effects. Dr. Phil, Kelly and Marlow are seen as high involvement speakers in their simultaneous speech. They are overlapping each other with no gaps and no pauses between the sentences. But Kelly might be seen as high considerateness speaker because she does not show support as Marlow does. Marlow shows encouragement when she overlaps Dr. Phil and says, *She told me exactly the same thing*, which is a sign of a high involvement speaker. Even if the conversation shows a little bit of disagreement, none of the speakers give any negative reaction when they overlap each other. They do not use any kind of hesitation, disruptions or interruptions to show any discomfort, which high considerateness speakers do. Tannen (1992) says overlaps do not occur at the middle of a sentence but rather at the end of the sentence, when the next speaker overlaps the current speaker's last word or begins to talk immediately after the current speaker, without any pauses. The participants in the conversation show more signs of been high involvement speakers and do not see any problem using overlapping speech in their conversation.

3.1 Minimal responses

Table 4. Number of minimal responses given by men and women in mixed-sex conversation, excluding the host

Episodes	Minimal responses male	Male %	Minimal responses female	Female %
1.May 12 th ,2008	4	10%	8	20%
2.May 5 th ,2008	2	5%	14	35%
3.November 6 th ,2007	5	12%	7	18%
Totals:	11	27%	29	73%
Totals:	40 (100%)			

Table 4 shows the total number of minimal responses from all three episodes, May 12th, 2008, May 5th, 2008 and November 6th, 2007, as well the numbers of minimal responses made by men and women to each other both in percentage and in number.

From all three episodes, we can see that women use twice as many minimal responses compared to men. Looking at all episodes, we can see that male speakers only have given a total of 27% minimal responses while women have given a total of 73% minimal responses in mixed-sex conversation. A possible reason for this might be that women think it is important to show the current speaker interest and that they are listening and supporting the speaker. That women use more minimal responses than men in mixed-sex conversation is clearly shown in table 4 and these results also show a connection to what many researchers have pointed out. According to Coates (2004) women tend to use more minimal responses than men. Minimal responses are used by women to indicate support for the current speaker and women tend to speak and hear language of connection and intimacy.

Female participants during all episodes gave minimal responses to almost all male participants during a conversation, but all female participants gave much more minimal responses to the host, Dr.Phil, while male participants just gave minimal responses to the female participants. The reason why women tend to give more minimal responses to the host might be to show respect, politeness and support, and because they want Dr. Phil's advice and support his speech by using minimal responses. The reason why men tend to use fewer minimal responses than women might be because, as Coates (2004) says, they use another

form of minimal responses which function in a negative way. The form men use is called delayed minimal responses, which show a lack of understanding and a lack of interest. If we look at Table 4 we can see that there are occasions where men also use minimal responses to support the current speaker, even if the results are not as high as those of the women.

Example (13) is taken from episode 1, May 12th, 2008, there are two male and two female guests. This example will illustrate when both female participants, Kelly, and Marlow, gives minimal responses to Dr. Phil. The vertical lines shows where minimal responses occur.

Example (13)

Dr.Phil: <i>I think words are very powerful.</i>	
Kelly:	<i>mhmm</i>
Marlow:	<i>nodding</i>
Dr.Phil: Words, <i>they have a lot of meaning to them</i> so that is why we have to be careful when we use it.	
Kelly:	<i>yeah, nodding</i>

(Episode 1, May 12th,2008)

Minimal responses is a strategy which is connected to a collaborative style and because women tend to use more minimal responses, women seem to use more collaborative communication than competitive communication. According to Coates (1996) a significant part of a collaborative floor is the use of minimal responses which is more frequent in female speech. Minimal responses occur more in a collaborative floor, when the floor is occupied by all speakers they have an obligation to signal their continued presence in the conversation. So, minimal responses signal that speakers are present and involved. In example 13 above, it is clearly shown that women are using collaborative communication and signal it by given minimal responses, which shows their support to the current speaker and that they are present and involved.

This two examples below show that men can also use minimal responses in mix-sex conversation ,which do not show a lack of understanding or a lack of interest on the contrary they use minimal responses to show support and interest.

Both (14) and (15) are taken from episode 2, May 5th, 2008. The guests are two female and one male. One on the female participants is the mother, Yolanda and the other female is the wife, Amanda and the male participant is the husband, whose name is Pierre. Example (14) illustrates when Pierre uses a minimal response when his wife is speaking and the vertical lines show when minimal responses appear. Example (15) shows when Pierre uses minimal responses while his mother Yolanda is speaking.

Example (14)

Amanda: *I am so glad I am done with this, even just know I cannot imagine how it would be if she still lived with us.*
 Pierre: | **yeah** | **nodding**

(Episode 2, May 5th, 2008)

Example (15)

Yolanda: *This is a very hard situation for me too and I love my son and do not want to destroy his marriage*
 Pierre: | **mhmm, nodding**
 Yolanda: *I love my son and do not want to destroy his marriage.*
 Pierre: | **smile, yeah**

(Episode 2, May 5th, 2008)

These two examples shows there are occasions were men also give minimal responses to support and show interest to the current speaker in mixed-sex conversation. But it is important to bear in mind that men still use fewer minimal responses than women because looking at Table 4 we see that the men's use of minimal responses is very low compared to women's result, which is twice as much. The reason why Pierre gives minimal response especially in these two examples might be to show respect and politeness towards his mother and wife. Another reason why Pierre used minimal responses could be because the conversation was basically about him and his marriage and he wanted to show understanding. The important thing we have to bear in mind is that even though men use minimal responses on some occasions, they still tend to use fewer minimal responses than women do.

According to Coates (2004) men use fewer minimal responses because for men to show status and independence is much more important than to show connection and intimacy, in mixed-

sex conversation. By showing status and independence men are much closer to use competitive communication.

3.2 Interruptions

Table 5 Number of interruptions made by men and women in mixed-sex conversation, excluding the host.

Episodes	Interruptions male	Male %	Interruptions female	Female %
1.May 12 th ,2008	11	25%	2	5%
2.May 5 th ,2008	13	30%	5	11%
3.November 6 th ,2007	9	20 %	4	9%
Totals:	33	75%	11	25%
Totals:	44 (100%)			

Table 5 shows how many times in the three episodes men and women interrupted each other during a conversation. The results for men and women are presented both in per cent and in numbers.

According to Coates (2004) men use interruptions in order to dominate the conversation and it is mostly women who get interrupted. If we look at the first episode from May 12th , 2008 and check how many times men have interrupted women, the results show that men interrupted 25% in the first episode while women just interrupted 5%. This shows that men have interrupted three times as much as women have, which is quite significant. In this episode there are as many male speakers as female speakers, excluding the host. This means that women have an equal chance to interrupt the male speakers but even so, they do not. A possible reason for this might be female speakers do not start talking until the very end of the conversation and the other one is left to hold the floor.

Coates (2004) says that interruption breaks the symmetry of the conversational model and that interruption is violations of the turn-taking rules of conversation and described as uncooperative. Male speakers interrupt more in conversation and this strategy is associated with competitiveness, dominance and a way of getting the floor.

In both episodes, May 5th, 2008 and November 6th, 2007 there are only one male guest and two female guest, if we exclude the host Dr. Phil. However, the point is that even if there **is** just one male guest in both episodes, they tend to interrupt much more than both of the female speakers. The reason for this might be that in non-private contexts **s** men dominate the speaking time and interrupt more because that might increase their status and they like to play the expert by using the competitive communication style.

Example (16) is taken from the third episode, November 6th, 2007. There are three guests, two female and one male. Terrie is the mother, Daine, is the wife and Adam is the husband. This example will show when Adam interrupts his mother and show a quite aggressive act. The vertical lines shows when Adam interrupts his mother.

Example (16)

Terrie: *If the result shows that the child is not his I will*

Adam: *why don't you get it, I told you that it is not going to make any difference. It's really not going to matter what happens.*

Terrie: *You do not seem to be happy because when*

Adam: *No, no I am happy but you make it worse.*

(Episode 3, November 6th, 2007)

Example (17) is taken the first episode, May 5th, 2008. The guests are two females and one male: the mother Yolanda, the ex-wife Amanda and the ex-husband Pierre. This example will show when Pierre both interrupts his mother and his ex-wife. The vertical line shows when interruptions occur during the conversation.

Example (17)

Yolanda: *I just think that if a man does not have any money*

Pierre: *but mom Amanda already knew about my financial statement and that I got this stuff from you.*

Yolanda: *I just want to*

Pierre: *My mother's problem is not my economical issues but she wishes that dated a Swiss girl instead of American girl.*

Yolanda: *No, no that is not true.*

Amanda: *I think he has to solve his problem with his mother, because it will*

Pierre:

I need to be

financial independent so I can solve my problem with my mother.

(Episode 2, May 5th, 2008)

Both examples (16) and (17) show how the male speaker interrupts and gets the floor in a mix-sex conversation. In example (16) the male speaker is quite aggressive when he interrupts and shows his dominance by taking over the conversation. His interactions are very uncooperative because he does not let the female speaker to finish her turn and cuts her off in the middle of her sentence.

According to Nolasco (1987) interruption seems to function as a way of controlling the topic or even change the topic and the speaker who interrupts can be seen as the speaker who tends to dominate one. In example (17) Pierre does not just interrupt mother but he even change the topic when he suddenly says that, the real issue is not his financial issues but her mother wants him to date Swiss girls. This shows a very dominant act and the involved speaker can take it in a negative, as his mother does. The reason for why men most of time interrupts women in mixed-sex conversation might be because they want their voice to be heard more, they like to play the expert and because they tend to use more the competitive communication style.

Looking at the table 5 we can see how few interruptions women use in mixed-sex conversation and Coates (1996) says women tend to think of interactions in a non-hierarchical way, and they avoid interruptions and the role of expert in conversation in order to minimize social distance between the participants. Women do not like to interrupt while the speaker is speaking and the reason for that could be because they avoid to be seen as dominant one and like to create a collaborative floor. Women want that each participant is seen equal and each participant's opinion is equal important to be heard in a conversation.

Researchers such as Tannen (1992) and Coates (2004) say that women use a non-competitive conversational style and do not interrupt; female speakers try to keep the conversation running smoothly during mixed-sex conversations. This could mean that women would not interrupt

since women are supposed to be collaborative and help each other out in a conversation. In general women use a collaborative style and try supporting the current speaker, but it is also important to see and bear in mind that women can also interrupt on some occasions, as shown in the table 5. Even if women use interruptions less than men in mixed-sex conversation, it is still seen as interruption.

Interruption is a strategy which is hard to avoid no matter what the gender is. However interruptions are seen as a negative factor, this constitutes a possible reason why women might tend to use it less and that is also why women use a more collaborative communication style when they interact with others.

3.3 Overlaps

Table 6. Number of overlaps made by men and women in mixed-sex conversation, excluding the host.

Episodes	Overlaps male	Male%	Overlaps female	Female%
1.May 12 th ,2008	8	13%	20	33%
2.May 5 th ,2008	3	5%	15	25%
3.November 6 th ,2008	4	7%	10	17%
Totals:	15	25%	45	75%
Totals:	60 (100%)			

Table 6 shows the total number of overlaps from all three episodes, May 12th, 2008, May 5th, 2008 and November 6th, 2007, as well the amount of overlapping speech made by men and women to each other both in per cent and in numbers.

Overlapping speech is a very complex strategy and it is used by both male speaker and female speaker, but female speakers tend to use it much more than male speakers in mixed-sex conversation. Overlapping speech can be seen as either positive or negative depending on how the speaker is as a person. Tannen (1992) defines the two types of people as high involvement and high considerateness speakers, where overlapping speech shows different effects. High involvement speakers give priority in a conversation to expressing enthusiastic support even if it involves simultaneous speech, while high considerateness speakers are more concerned with being considerate of others. High considerateness speaker does not prefer to impose on the conversation as a whole or on specific comments of another conversant

Female speakers do not see overlapping speech as negative, the reason might be because women prefer to be in collaborative floor where all participants jointly occupy the floor simultaneously, in this way overlapping speech has a positive effect. For women overlaps show that every participants are involved in the conversation and they are not seen as interruptions. Coates (2004) says that when overlap speech occurs in a collaborative floor it is mostly to show participants are involved and present in the conversation and instead of beginning speaking in the middle of the current speaker's turn, the next speaker begins to speak at the very end of current speaker's turn, overlapping the last word. Over-anticipation does not necessarily force the first speaker to finish his/her turn. Another reason why overlaps are preferred in collaborative floor because overlaps are cooperative and it do not change the topic but elaborate on it.

Men on the other hand prefer more monologues, one-at-a-time floor in conversation. If the female speaker overlaps a male speaker in one-at-a-time conversation he may experience it as interruption and that the next speaker is trying to take the floor, which is not the intention. But it is still important to remember and see that even men can be high involvement speakers and use overlapping speech as it is shown in table 6, but it depends on how the speaker as a person and how well do the speakers know each other. Even if men use overlapping speech it might not show as much elaboration as that of women do, but still they do not change the topic as they do when they use interruption.

This example is taken from episode 1, May 12th, 2008. This shows a conversation where three participants, two females and one male occupy the floor simultaneously and use overlapping speech. Kelly, Billy and Marlow are high involvement speakers and they do not show any kind of discomfort or try to change the topic during the conversation. Kelly and Billy is a couple and Marlow is Billy's brother's wife. The vertical lines show when overlapping speech occurs during the conversation.

Example (18)

Kelly: *I never tried to stand between Billy having a relationship with his family.*

Billy: *I am a grown man, I am free to hang around my family whenever I want and Kelly, my wife has no problem with that.*

Kelly:

That

is exactly what I mean.

Marlow:

I just think over the last year Kelly, you have crossed the line with me and the rest of the family.

Kelly and Billy are showing support when they overlap each other and Billy is including few words of encouragement when he says, *my wife has no problem with that*. Kelly overlaps Billy but still gives a supportive answer. Even though Marlow does not show much support, she does not show any kind of discomfort either during this conversation. One important reason why these participants do not show any discomfort when they overlap each other might be because they know each other well and they belong in the same family. So, all three participants are high involvement speakers where overlapping speech does not show any negative effect.

Looking at the results we see that women use overlapping speech much more than men in mixed-sex conversation. Women use it more because for them, overlapping speech is seen as a cooperative strategy rather than a competitive strategy, which is how most men see it. Still on some occasions there are men using overlapping speech in mixed-sex conversation and that is why it is important to know what kind of people the participants are in a mixed-sex conversation, are they high involvement speakers or high consideration speakers.

4. Conclusion

In this study we have investigated whether there are any similarities and differences between men and women in mixed-sex conversation and which communication style each gender uses. The focus has been on two styles, collaborative communication style and competitive communication style and to get a better view of which style is mostly used by women and men. Three specific strategies, such as minimal responses, interruptions and overlaps have also been analysed. Both primary and secondary material that have been analysed comes up to the same conclusion, women are more likely to use collaborative communication style, where all the participants occupy the floor simultaneously.

Women use more minimal responses to show support and interest to the current speaker, interrupt less than men to avoid playing the expert in the conversation and use overlapping

speech which effect in positive way because, most women are high involvement speakers. Tannen (1992) says that the reason why women use a collaborative style is because they like to create more intimacy and show that all people are the same and feel equally close to each other.

The primary and secondary material show that men use more competitive communication style and especially in mixed-sex conversation, they tend to interrupt women much more, take over the floor to play the expert and use fewer minimal responses. If men use minimal responses it is because they want to show respect or politeness, and as the result shows it is very rare that men use minimal responses. Coates (2004) says that competitive style is connected with men, by this they are stressing their own individuality and emphasizing the hierarchical relationship that they enter into with other people.

The results show that it is very important to be aware of the host's role, Dr Phil in the primary material. The results where Dr. Phil is included show huge differences when we look at the results where Dr. Phil is excluded. These differences affect only the results for the male category. Dr. Phil's result of the three strategies, such as minimal responses, interruptions and overlaps have been analysed separately.

The results presented in this study may give an indication of gender-oriented, linguistic differences. In order to be able to say something even more conclusive more studies on a larger material would have to be conducted.