

## **Keeping score: A comparative analysis of disagreements in French, Italian and Australian football TV shows.**

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The present study is part of a broader investigation on sociocultural norms regulating conflict talk and the communication of negative emotions across Anglo-Australian, French and Italian cultural groups. Verbal conflict can perform several social functions, including negotiation of social boundaries, expression of solidarity and intimacy, and the provision of “an organized arena for the expression of negative affect” (Vuchinich 1990:134). In this paper, we focus on sequences of conflict talk in TV football shows. TV football shows represent specific types of talk-shows, in which disagreements between the participants are quite frequent, if not even an integral feature of the genre. They also tend to involve principally male participants, which allows the researcher to narrow down the number of variables that may affect analysis results.

One of the most salient features of conflict talk is the speakers’ non-compliance with the norms of turn-taking normally observed during conversation, as the participants attempt to gain control of the floor, and their speech overlaps (Fele 1991; Vuchinich 1990).

While overlapping can occur as an “unintentional infringement” of the speaker’s right (Murata 1994), competitive interruptions tend to be viewed as “rude and disrespectful acts” (Goldberg 1990). As such they are normally seen as indexes of conflict and as face-threatening. However, cultural differences have been identified in the frequency and interpretation of interruptions and overlaps (e.g. Edelski 1981; Béal 1992), as well as, more broadly, in sociocultural norms regulating conflict talk (Tannen 1981; Schiffri 1984; Kakava 2002).

Our aim is to identify and describe the structure of conflict exchanges in the specific context of the TV football show, and across the three cultural groups considered, by focusing on interruptions and overlaps, but also taking into account related issues such as power relationships and dominance, use of humour and irony, and more generally strategies employed to manage conflict talk.

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