

Agreement and Disagreement Strategies In Television Talk Shows	By: Dr. Miranda Mohamed Khamis EL-Zouka English Department Faculty of Arts Alexandria University Damanhour Branch
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Introduction

Television talk shows attract the attention of a large number of people because the issues discussed are usually of vital importance to the public as they cover the most controversial political, economic, and social problems. The major purpose of talk shows is to get the guest(s) to speak and to make the public aware of the current problems (Grundy, 2000:171; Ilie, 2001:217). This usually happens because it is the everyday, worldwide problems, and experiences of people that gain priority in media genres (Lorenzo-Dus, 2005: 614). Due to the possible threatening nature of the topics discussed, the interviewer must put the interviewees at their ease (Grundy, 2000: 172). In this way, the latter can indicate his/her personal opinion to show whether he/she agrees or disagrees with the questions asked by the former. The latter's response can also be accompanied by reasons and elaborations to support his/her answer to convince the viewers of it.

Aims of the Study

This study investigates the agreement and disagreement strategies participants in television talk shows use to express their viewpoints concerning various

economic, political, and social issues. It also investigates the frequency of using each agreement and disagreement strategy as well as the relation between these strategies and politeness, power, and gender differences.

To carry out this study, seven hours of various episodes of popular British and American television talk shows have been tape-recorded. These shows are *Hard Talk*, *Hard Talk Extra*, *Have Your Say* and *The World Debate*, all of which are shown on the BBC World channel, and the conversational parts of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, shown on the MBC4 channel. The topics discussed in these episodes cover economic, political, and social fields. Equal amount of time has been allotted for each field. (See appendix for transcription conventions)

Theoretical Background

Agreement and disagreement strategies can be expressed using various linguistic techniques. The former can be indicated through repetition, upgraded agreement, explicit indicants of agreement, and back-channel responses. The latter can be expressed through prefaces, explicit indicants of disagreement, contradictory assessments, interruptions, and overlaps.

Agreement and disagreement strategies have been studied in relation to many linguistic aspects such as politeness, power, and gender differences. As for politeness, Brown and Levinson's *Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomenon*, first published in 1978, is considered the most comprehensive work on linguistic politeness. They deal with agreement and disagreement in their distinction between positive and

negative faces. They define the former as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some other member". This refers to the person's wish to be well thought of and understood by others. The latter is defined as "the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others". This refers to the person's wish not to be imposed on by others and to be allowed freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 2004: 322). Another important distinction they make is the difference between positive and negative politeness. The former is directed towards the positive face of the listener and his positive self-image, and this shows that both the speaker and the listener have the same desire, opinion, and belief. In the latter, the speaker respects the negative face of the listener as the former does not interfere in the latter's freedom of action, and at the same time the former expresses his opinion through apologies for interfering, hedges, and other softening mechanisms (Brown & Levinson, 2004: 328). Agreement is dealt with as one of the positive face strategies, and it indicates closeness and mutual understanding between speakers because they share the same opinion. This entails that disagreements threaten the listener's positive face as the speaker indicates that the listener's opinion is undesirable or partially wrong, and this can widen the gap between them.

Leech (1983: 133-38) deals with agreements and disagreements in one of his maxims of politeness. In this respect, he indicates that politeness is focused on the listener more than on the speaker. This shows that he concentrates on positive politeness rather than on

negative politeness. In the agreement maxim, Leech (1983: 132) indicates:

- (a) Minimize disagreement between the speaker and the listener.
- (b) Maximize agreement between the speaker and the listener.

He also indicates that submaxim (b) is less important than submaxim (a). In daily conversations, people tend to agree with each other's opinions and beliefs. Disagreements, expressed through regrets and partial agreements, are more preferable than plain disagreements.

Agreements and disagreements have also been studied in the context of power relations. Weber (as cited in Fishman, 1997) defines power as "a chance of one person to impose her or his will on another." Coates (1993: 85) also defines it as "an asymmetric dimension of relative power". This means that in any kind of interaction the speaker may have relatively more or less power than the listener. As a matter of fact, the way people interact in daily situations reflects the power-distance relationship. This requires that the relationship between the speaker and the listener must be seen similarly by both sides so that none of them might be upset by the conversational strategies used by the other because these strategies indicate the appropriate relationship between them. The more powerful member in an interaction usually influences the direction to which it develops. Participants in any interaction show their power in various ways as they construct their identity in response to the behavior of others (Holmes, 2005:32-3).

Agreement and disagreement strategies have also been studied in relation to gender differences in verbal interaction. In many societies, men have more status than women and thus have more power (Fishman, 1997:416). Because of their power differences, men's talk is more competitive and confrontative than females who prefer solidarity and support in their interaction (Coates, 1993:136). In men's talk, there are few explicit agreeing responses and they can disagree baldly with their conversational partner. However, in female's talk, there are many agreeing responses as they complete each other's utterances and affirm each other's opinion to give the impression that they are cooperative. Females express their disagreement by using linguistic softening mechanisms (Holmes, 1995:60).

Analyzing Agreement Strategies - Repetition

According to Tannen (1987:89; 1989:97), repetition is a way through which speakers create a relationship. It also shows one's response and acceptance of others' utterances. Two forms of repetition have been identified: self-repetition and allo-repetition. In the former, the speaker repeats what he/she says, while the latter is a collaborative activity between speakers. Murata (as cited in Sawir, 2004) indicates different kinds of repetition: interruption-oriented repetition, solidarity repetition, hesitation repetition, self-avoidance repetition, and reformulation repetition. The first two kinds are allo-repetitions and the rest are self-repetition.

Tannen (1989:51) maintains that repetition has eight functions which are: to keep the floor for a given speaker, to indicate listenership, to stall, to provide back-channel responses, to gear up to answer or to speak, to show appreciation of what is going on, to link ideas, and to ratify another person's contribution in conversation. Perrin, Deshaies, & Paradis (2003) mention four kinds of allo-repetition which are: taking into account function, confirmation request function, positive reply function, and negative reply function.

In analyzing television talk shows, the function of allo-repetition is to show involvement and listenership in a conversation as well as to indicate that the interviewee agrees with what the interviewer says or asks and vice versa.

In the analyzed episodes, repetition is used in all economic, political, and social issues. In episodes dealing with economic issues, repetition that shows agreement is used thirteen times, eight of which are used by the interviewees to confirm what the interviewers are saying or asking, and five are used by the interviewers. The following extract illustrates repetition in this kind of episodes:

Interviewer: ...But I mean you've got industrialists like Sir Richard Bronson, Head of Virgin, who's saying "look now I'm paying much fuel costs for my aviation business, and I want to see if I can actually build my own refinery. I mean that just what's the problem with building
*refineries?

Sadat AL-Husseini: *It has to be[

Interviewer: [It's very expensive?

Sadat AL-Husseini: It's very expensive.

Interviewer: It takes long time to build?

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 22/9/2005)

The issue discussed is high oil prices that make some industrialists want to build their own refineries to cut down the expenses. When the interviewer asks if building refineries is expensive, Sadat AL-Husseini, Head of the Saudi oil company ARAMCO, uses '**solidarity repetition**' to indicate his agreement with what the interviewer asks about. Murata (as cited in Sawir, 2004) maintains that the repetition of words and phrases in solidarity repetition does not add any new information to aid the development of a topic. Rather it shows the speakers' involvement in a given conversation and their agreement with what is discussed.

Another significant extract is the following one:

Interviewer: ...Of course the downside of what has happened in recent times for the Russian economy is that you are massively reliant on one sector of your economy and that is natural resources.

Igor Yurgens: Not quite true. I would say that 30% of our economy (p) is driven by that.

Interviewer: 30%??

Igor Yurgens: **30% not more than that.**

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 6/10/2005)

The problem discussed is that the Russian economy is highly dependent on natural resources, especially oil. There are two repetitions in the extract. The first is said

by the interviewer when he asks “30%?” using a rising intonation to express his disbelief of this fact and to request confirmation for it. The second repetition is said by the interviewee when he says “30%” and adds “*no more than that*” to emphasize what he said previously that only thirty percent of the Russian economy depends on oil. The latter is called ‘**additive repetition**’. According to Deen (1997) an additive repetition does not only express the agreement of the speaker with the question he is asked about, but also adds additional information to justify his opinion.

In episodes dealing with political issues, repetition is used nine times, and is only used by the interviewees. The following extract is a good example:

Interviewer: You can't get credibility back. (p) My poll before the election: 60% of the sample said they didn't trust Tony Blair, 38% said they used to trust him, but now they don't.

Lance Price: I think that considerable damage has been done to that

relation*ship.

Interviewer: *so you take responsibility?

Lance Price: **I take responsibility for it, and I take the responsibility** for having been of another operation of of a media, if you want to call it that. They did rely on techniques that were not justifiable and did damage to that relationship.

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 30/9/2005)

The interviewee is lance Price, Tony Blair's former spin doctor, who was responsible for telling lies to the media to justify any given political stance. As a result, in response to the question whether he takes responsibility for damaging the relationship between Tony Blair and his people because of the lies that have been told to the media, Price expresses his agreement using additive repetition when he repeats "*I take responsibility*", and then adds further elaboration to justify his opinion by saying that he took part in an operation that depended on crooked techniques, and that damaged the relationship between the British public and the government represented in Tony Blair.

Another example is the following extract:

Interviewer: So you think there's no criminality in the IRA?

Alex Reid: No, no.

Interviewer: You don't think they're responsible for the 26-million-North Bank robbery?

Alex Reid: Uh, well, this issue their leadership had had denied it.

Interviewer: You believed them?

Alex Reid: **Oh, I believed them.**

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 30/9/2005)

The interviewee is Father Alex Reid who supports the IRA. When asked if he believes that the IRA is not responsible for the North Bank robbery, he responds by saying "*I believe them*", which is a solidarity repetition, preceded by "*oh*" to emphasize his agreement.

Repetition is also used in episodes dealing with social issues and problems twenty nine times, twelve of which are used by the interviewers and the rest by the interviewees. The following extract demonstrates the various kinds of repetition used:

Interviewer: Must have been a kind of...if you've been dialectic as you say. It must be a real liberation to find you've this (p) visual imagination of technical abilities that you could do things that your teachers didn't think you could do?

David Bailey: The teachers were awful @ they treated me as a moron, an idiot, but luckily I was arrogant enough to think they were idiots and God I can't spell...I remember the headmaster saying somebody painted this great wall.

Interviewer: That was you?

David Bailey: **That was me, yeah.**

(Hard Talk Extra, BBC World, 23 /9/2005)

In the above extract, the interviewer discusses with the British photographer David Bailey memories of his childhood when he was at school. In the course of the interview, the interviewer asks Bailey "*That was you?*" to make sure it was Bailey who painted the wall of the school, and the latter responds saying "*That was me, yeah*". The function of this allo-repetition is to indicate that Bailey shows his active listenership as well as his agreement with what is being said. This is a solidarity repetition and is also an echoing of what the interviewer is asking about. Ferrara (1994:70) uses the term '**echoing**' to refer to the repetition of another person's statement

using similar words and similar intonation patterns to express agreement. In the extract, Bailey's agreement is further emphasized using the explicit indicant of agreement "yeah".

The following extract demonstrates another kind of repetition to express agreement in social episodes:

Interviewer: This leads us to our next project 'democracy' or the project that you've been working on.

David Bailey: Yeah, yeah * yeah.

Interviewer: *which is is a similar idea in a way which is that people's faces looking different, but shot pretty much the same way. Is that a fair assessment?

David Bailey: **That's a fair assessment...** You take hundreds of pictures for each person. I've 6 clicks. That's 6 shots.

Interviewer: 6?

David Bailey: 6.

(*Hard Talk Extra*, BBC World, 23/9/2005)

This part of the conversation is about a project started by Bailey called 'democracy'. Its basic concept is to show that a photographer can have a fixed style that applies to people's different faces. The interviewer asks Bailey if his interpretation of the concept of the project is correct by asking him "*Is that a fair assessment?*", and Bailey expresses his agreement by saying "*That's a fair assessment*" to indicate his active listenership, and his agreement with what is asked by the interviewer. His repetition is an additive one in which he adds that he takes hundreds of pictures for each person and that he

takes six shots. Another significant repetition is that done by the interviewer when he asks "6?". Repetition in this case is a request for confirmation through which he expresses his amazement that every person is shot six times and requires a confirmation for that. Bailey, in turn, responds by repeating "6" to ensure the interviewer that what he has said is correct. This repetition is also a solidarity repetition.

Another kind of repetition in episodes dealing with social issues is illustrated in the following extract:

Oprah: and so a lot of women are keeping themselves caught in fat in order to prevent themselves from being *
hot babes.

Psychiatrist:

***hot babes.**

Oprah: Cause they're scared of it.

Psychiatrist: **They're scared of it** and also it keeps a layer away from the intimacy.

(The Oprah Winfrey Show, MBC4, 10/9/2005)

This episode discusses the issue of weight. Oprah says that some women like being fat to prevent themselves from having any affair because they are scared of it. The psychiatrist expresses her positive attitude and full agreement with what Oprah says twice. In the first time, she uses '**overlapping repetition**' of what Oprah says "*hot babes*". According to Murata (as cited in Sawir, 2004) overlapped repetition indicates positive attitudes towards conversational partners. In the second time, she uses additive repetition "*They're scared of it*", and then

adds “*and also it keeps a layer away from the intimacy*” to prove her point of view.

It has been noticed that in episodes dealing with social issues and problems twelve of the repetitions are said by the interviewers. This can be due to the fact that in this kind of episodes, the interviewee is the main source of information, and some of them have certain social problems, so they need the counseling and the support of the interviewers who, in turn, do this by using repetition. The following extract illustrates this fact:

Oprah: But, you know, I think about what you said earlier. There should be give and take. There obviously is some compromise, but most of the time you should feel like this is really working and and your good bond and I’m feeling very good.

Catherine: I want to have that feeling.

Oprah: **You want to have that feeling.**

(*The Oprah Winfrey Show*, MBC4, 11/ 9 /2005)

The above extract is about Catherine who has given up everything for her fiancée and he has done nothing for her in return to show his appreciation. So, Oprah tells her that there should be some compromise for this relationship to work out and as a result she will feel good. Then, Catherine says “*I want to have that feeling*”, and Oprah repeats “*You want to have that feeling*” in an intonation pattern similar to Catherine’s to show her solidarity and support. So, this repetition is an echoing.

From the previous discussion about repetition it has been noticed that three main kinds of repetition are used

in all the episodes, whether, economic, political, and social. These are solidarity repetition, additive repetition, and echoing. In social episodes, overlapping repetition is also used. Moreover, it has been noticed that the strategy of expressing agreement using repetition is used more in social episodes, followed by economic ones, and is least used in political episodes. Table (1) below illustrates the frequency of using repetition in each kind of episodes:

Table (1) The Frequency of using Repetition in Television Talk Shows

Agreement Strategy	Social Episodes	Economic Episodes	Political Episodes
Repetition	29	13	9

- Upgraded Agreement

Sometimes when speakers want to express their strong approval concerning a given issue, they use the linguistic technique of upgraded agreement. Thus, it is a way to maximize agreement between speakers (Leech, 1983:138). Pomerantz (1984:65) defines upgraded evaluations generally as "an assessment of the referent assessed in the prior that incorporates upgraded evaluative terms relative to the prior." He also indicates that to express upgraded evaluations two techniques can be used:

- 1- Use a stronger evaluative term than the prior given graded sets of descriptors.
- 2- Use an intensifier to modify the prior evaluative descriptor.

Upgraded agreement is used in the tape-recorded episodes dealing with economic issues fourteen times by the interviewees as in the next extract:

Interviewer: You're a farmer, I think, aren't you?

Jonathan: I'm indeed.

Interviewer: Now farming is part of the EU, and the EU is famous for giving generous subsidies to its followers. You've got a subsidy?

Jonathan: **Yeah, I certainly do, yes.**

(Have Your Say, BBC World, 25/9/2005)

The issue dealt with in this episode is that the EU gives a lot of subsidies to farmers, and the problem is whether this is good or bad for the economy. When the interviewer asks whether the caller gets a subsidy, he responds directly saying "*Yeah, I certainly do, yes*" in which the explicit indicant of agreement "*yeah*" is used. Then, he uses the adverb "*certainly*" which functions as an intensifier to show the caller's strong agreement that he receives subsidies. He also uses the explicit indicant of agreement "*yes*" to further emphasize his agreement.

In another part of the same program, the following extract occurs:

Interviewer: Good. So free trade is a good thing for you?

Greg: **Free trade is excellent.** It has to be free trade.

(Have Your Say, BBC World, 25/ 9/ 2005)

In this part of the program, the issue of free trade is discussed. When the interviewer asks the caller if free

trade is good for him, he responds saying "*Free trade is excellent*" in which the adjective '*excellent*' is a stronger evaluative one than "*good*" used by the interviewer in his question "*So free trade is a good thing for you?*". The caller's agreement is also emphasized by using the imperative sentence "*It has to be free trade*".

In episodes dealing with political issues, upgraded agreement is used six times by the interviewees. The next extract is an illustration of this:

Interviewer: Well, Nationalists, Catholics, Republicans might find it easy to believe the IRA, but for Unionists who see them as people who have murdered, tortured, stolen, done everything evil for thirty years. Why you, do you understand, why they find it less easy to trust the IRA?

Alex Reid: Yes, I would surely. I mean the IRA themselves will understand that they don't have the same experience (p), and that for that's understandable because their experience of the IRA has been um suffering as people been killed, people been injured, etc.

(*Hard Talk, BBC World, 13/10/2005*)

The episode discusses the issue of the IRA, and that some people in Britain do not trust it because of its long history in criminality. So, when asked if he understands that people find it difficult to trust the IRA, Alex Reid indicates his agreement saying "*Yes, I would surely*" in which he uses the explicit indicant of agreement "*yes*", and then further asserts it using "*I would*" followed by the intensifying adverbial form "*surely*". Reid's answer is

followed by an elaboration that people's experience of the IRA is a bad one because of the killing that has taken place to convince the interviewer and the viewers of his opinion.

Another extract to illustrate upgraded agreement is the following one:

Interviewer: in that case given everything you've told me about your ideological foundations, do you really believe that your Party is relevant to the India of the 21st century?

Brinda Karat: **Most definitely?** I mean there's no question about it. In fact, I'd see the relevance of a Party basing itself on the understanding of the differences between the classes. I think my Party, the Communist Party of India's Marxist, is extremely relevant.

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 18/10/2005)

When the interviewer asks Brinda Karat, Head of India's Communist Party, "*Do you really believe that your Party is relevant to the India of the 21st century?*", she uses upgraded agreement twice. In the first, she uses the superlative form "*Most definitely*" using a rising intonation. Then she confirms her agreement saying "*There's no question about it*". In the second time, she says "*I think my Party, the Communist Party of India's Marxist, is extremely relevant*" in which the intensifying adverb "*extremely*" is used before "*relevant*" to express her belief in the relevance and the importance of her Party.

Upgraded agreement is also used in episodes dealing with social issues nine times by the interviewees as the following example illustrates:

Interviewer: ...'The Color Purple' a Broadway musical? I've never thought I'd hear about it. It's a big leap, isn't it?

Alice Walker: **It's quite a big leap**, and at first I thought it was a bad idea, but I've been convinced it's gonna be a wonderful musical.

(*Hard Talk Extra*, BBC World, 14/10/2005)

The issue dealt with is Alice Walker's novel '*The Color Purple*' that deals with racism in the United States. When the interviewer asks if adapting the novel for a Broadway musical is a big leap, Walker shows her strong agreement by saying "*It's quite a big leap*" in which she uses the intensifier "*quite*" before "*a big leap*" which is, in turn, a repetition of what the interviewer asks "*It's a big leap, isn't it?*". It can be noticed that Walker elaborates her answer to emphasize that she agrees that her novel will be a wonderful Broadway musical.

Expressing upgraded agreement using a stronger evaluative term than the prior can also be illustrated through the following extract:

Interviewer: I imagine that this was incredibly devastating for you when you (p) first saw the images of the hurricane?

Wynton Marsallis: Well, **it's deeper than that**. You know @ your culture, your memory, your physical things

that you remember being whipped or threatened, and then, of course, there's the people as we began to see. When we see people stranded, the suffering of the people, people (p) not being able to catch up with their loved ones. It's more than devastating. That's all. I can't describe it really.

(Hard Talk Extra, BBC World, 30/9/2005)

When asked if watching the people in hurricane Katrina was devastating, Wynton Marsallis, an American musician, indicates his agreement using upgraded agreement twice. In the first, he uses the comparative form "deeper" in "It's deeper than that" which indicates that what he feels is more than just devastating. Then, he uses another comparative form "Its more than devastating". The two comparative forms act as intensifiers modifying the prior evaluative lexeme "devastating". Marsallis then uses an elaboration which is that it is devastating because one can see the suffering of the people and all one's memories gone to convince the interviewer and the viewers of his point of view.

It has been noticed that using a stronger evaluative term to express upgraded agreement is not actually used in any of the tape-recorded episodes dealing with political matters. Moreover, upgraded agreement is mostly used in economic episodes, followed by social ones, and is least used in political ones as table (2) below illustrates:

Table (2) The Frequency of using Upgraded Agreement in Television Talk Shows

Agreement Strategy	Economic Episodes	Social Episodes	Political Episodes
Upgraded agreement	14	9	6

- Explicit Indicators of Agreement

Agreement can be expressed explicitly by using lexical items like 'yes', and 'right', short positive answers like 'It does', and 'I would', as well as by using sentences like 'I agree with you', and 'You're right'. This method is the most commonly used strategy.

This method is used in economic episodes twenty seven times by the interviewees. The following extract illustrates this:

Interviewer: It's true isn't it that everybody who goes shopping in the developed world these days says everything they look at seems to be made in China. Isn't that an inevitable result of lifting trade barriers?

Peter Southerland: **Of course**, lifting trade barriers and the introduction of China in the World Trade Organization has opened a global market for Chinese producers. So, **I accept, of course**, that that means that products are manufactured in China are exported to the EU. That has significant benefits.

(Have Your Say, BBC World, 25/9/2005)

When asked if lifting trade barriers led to the increase of Chinese products in the markets, Peter Southerland uses

the explicit indicant of agreement "*of course*" followed by the partial repetition '*lifting trade barriers*' which is used by the interviewer in his question "*Isn't that an inevitable of lifting trade barriers?*". Moreover, he repeats his agreement using "*I accept*" followed by "*of course*" in "*I accept of course that...benefits*" which is an elaboration that explains his point of view.

Explicit indicants of agreement are used fifteen times in episodes dealing with political matters, fourteen of which are used by the interviewees and once by the interviewer. The following extract demonstrates this strategy:

Lance Price: ...the fact that I had lied. I've told the media a version of the story which is different from the actual truth.

Interviewer: Well, you haven't told the truth.

Lance Price: **You're right. You're right.** I've given them a version of the story which wasn't true.

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 4/10/2005)

In the above extract, Lance Price, Tony Blair's former spin doctor, agrees with the interviewer that he has not told the media the truth about some political matters using "*You're right*" which he repeats twice to emphasize this matter.

In episodes dealing with social issues, explicit indicants of agreement are used seventy five times, six of which are used by the interviewers, and the rest by the interviewees. The following extract indicates this strategy:

Interviewer: I mean anybody looking at what you do, and the fact you get paid for what you do is, must think, you get possibly the best job in the world.

David Bailey: **Yes**, it's good. It's a good job...

(*Hard Talk Extra*, BBC World, 23/9/2005)

When the interviewer tells the British photographer, David Bailey, that people think he has got the best job in the world, the latter uses the explicit indicant of agreement "yes" followed by the repeated sentence "*It's good. It's a good job*" to confirm his agreement.

Another good example is the following extract:

Oprah: You don't think you're worth of being loved and until you can fix that you'll always have the weight as an issue for you because that's the issue for you.

Trevor Jackson: **I agree with you.**

Psychiatrist: You need to get to a point where you feel like Trevor is one lucky guy to have me.

Trevor Jackson: **Yeah, yeah, yeah.**

(*The Oprah Winfrey Show*, MBC4, 10/9/2005)

In this episode, Trevor and Trina Jackson are about to get divorced because of the latter's weight problem. Through this discussion, Oprah comes to the conclusion that the wife's problem stems from the fact that she is not sure of herself, and that she wrongly thinks that does not deserve her husband's love because he is better than her, and that is the main problem for her. Trevor shows his agreement with Oprah's analysis by saying "*I agree with you*". When the psychiatrist tells Trina that she must feel that her

husband is lucky to have her and she is not inferior to him, Trevor indicates his agreement using "yeah" that he repeats three times for emphasis.

It becomes obvious from the above discussion that using explicit indicants of agreement is one of the most frequent strategies used. It is mostly used in social episodes, followed by economic ones, and is least used in political episodes as table (3) below demonstrates:

Table (3) The Frequency of using Explicit Indicants of Agreement in Television Talk Shows

Agreement Strategy	Social Episodes	Economic Episodes	Political Episodes
Explicit Indicants of Agreement	75	27	15

- Back-Channels

Back-channels are also called 'minimal responses'. These are brief utterances such as 'um', 'right', and 'ok' that occur in all forms of talk, and imply interest and attention on the part of the listener (Young, 1996: 61). They indicate that all speakers are involved and accept what is being said. Thus, these are used by speakers to monitor and to support each other's contribution (Coates, 1996:143-5). Holmes & Stubbe (1997:7-8) indicate that back-channels can either be neutral or supportive. The former are signals for the speaker to continue speaking. Therefore, they are interactionally supportive but have a neutral effect. They are uttered in a low pitch, level intonation, and a low

volume. The latter show more interactional involvement and indicate surprise, interest, and agreement. They are said in a high volume and an extended pitch spun. Generally, both kinds of back-channels signal reassurance that the speaker is understood and the listener agrees with what he says. In fact, Coates (1989:106) indicates that in information-oriented sections of conversations, back-channels are not frequently used, and if used, they signal agreement among participants.

In the analyzed economic episodes, back-channels are used forty times nearly equally divided between the interviewers and the interviewees. The following extract demonstrates this strategy:

Sadat AL-Husseini: One might add about...these high oil prices are a mixed blessing.

Interviewer: **Uh.**

Sadat AL-Husseini: In the harmony, yes. They're going to be harmful like Kaugman says to Americans in a lot of ways, but they're hopeful it'll spur conversation.

Interviewer: **Yeah.**

Sadat AL-Husseini: Acceleration of the use of alternative energy eh eh and other eh step to reduce our dependence on oil which as a nation we must do.

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 22/9/2005)

The back-channels used are "uh" and "yeah" which are said by the interviewer to signal her agreement with the interviewee's viewpoint concerning high oil prices, and to encourage him to continue what he is saying.

In political episodes, back-channels are used forty eight times and are almost equally divided between the interviewers and the interviewees. The next extract with Abd AL-Haq AL-'Ani, Saddam Hussein's lawyer, is an illustration of this strategy:

Interviewer: So, what were these people guilty of in DeJail?

Abd AL-Haq AL-'Ani: Treason.

Interviewer: Why were they guilty of treason?

Abd AL-Haq AL-'Ani: Because they confessed of belonging to the Da'wah Party which was operating for Iran at the time of war between Iraq and Iran.

Interviewer: They were opposed to the Iran-Iraq war, yes?

Abd AL-Haq AL-'Ani: No, no. The Da'wah Party was a tool for the Iranian government.

Interviewer: Uh.

Abd AL-Haq AL-'Ani: Da'wah Party was created by the Shia of Iran.

Interviewer: Uh.

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 25/10/2005)

In the extract about the people killed by Saddam Hussein in the Iraqi village of DeJail, the back-channel response "uh" is used by the interviewer twice to indicate that he follows what AL-'Ani is telling him concerning the Da'wah Party and agrees with what he is saying.

In episodes dealing with social issues, back-channels are used a hundred and seventeen times nearly equally divided by both the interviewers and the

interviewees. The following extract is an illustration of using this strategy:

Oprah: ...She must be at least forty years old. (p) That's good. He's open to any woman of any race, any *religion.

Richard O'Hara: *Uh uh.

Oprah: She has to be able to have the time, right?

Richard O'Hara: Yeah, I think the hard part about this Oprah is the freedom part. I say (p) female, fit, free, and funny (p). It's hard to get away for six months...but to get to the freedom to do it just, you know, what about our children, our home, our pets, or something like *that.

Oprah:

*Uh.

Richard O'Hara: That's the hard part.

(The Oprah Winfrey Show, MBC4, 11/9/2005)

In this episode, Richard wants to know a woman to marry. When Oprah mentions the qualities he wants in this woman, and that he does not care about her race or religion, he indicates his agreement using the back-channel response "uh" which he repeats twice for emphasis. When he says that freedom is difficult, Oprah agrees using the overlapping back-channel response "uh" to show that she is following him and completely agrees with him. This overlapping back-channel response signals a high degree of involvement on the part of the listener.

Back-channel responses are mostly used in social episodes, followed by political ones, and are least used in economic episodes. Table (4) below illustrates the frequency of using this strategy in the three kinds of episodes:

Table (4) The Frequency of using Back-Channel Responses in Television Talk Shows

Agreement Strategy	Social Episodes	Political Episodes	Economic Episodes
Back-channel Responses	117	48	40

Analyzing Disagreement Strategies

In all the episodes, despite instances of agreement mentioned above, there are also some instances of disagreement among speakers. Disagreements are dispreferred second pair parts, and may be expressed through many strategies such as prefaces, interruptions, overlaps and through other strategies (Levinson, 1983:334). In this part of the research, the disagreement strategies used in the tape-recorded television talk shows are examined.

- Prefaces

Sometimes the agreement component precedes that of the disagreement. In this case, contradictory conjunctions such as '*but*', '*however*', and '*though*' are used. According to Pomerantz (1984:72) the agreement components which precede those of disagreements are considered weak agreement forms.

This strategy is used nine times by the interviewees in episodes dealing with economic topics as in the following extract:

Interviewer: ...Your country has recently just recently expanded its refining capacity in Jogorad, but a lot of people say the reason why people won't go into refining is partly it's not profitable as extraction. I mean you have found it profitable?

PMS Prasad: **In a way, yes, but there are risks to what's been happening.** You see eh in the last twenty years @ there've been a number of pressures because of the surplus capacity. **The complaints, the regulations have been very tight, @ nobody was paying any higher prices to do this.**

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 22/9/2005)

The interviewee, PMS Prasad, Head of an Indian oil company, is asked a question about whether his company has found refining profitable, which is opposite to what people say that extraction is more profitable. He begins his answer saying "*In a way, yes*" that signals a very weak agreement, and conveys his hesitancy that his company has found refining profitable. Then, he uses the discourse marker "*but*" that signals limitation. It also indicates weak agreement. Moreover, he says that there are risks in this field that explains the reason for his disagreement to what the interviewer asks. In the rest of the quotation, he explains the risks involved in the refining business which are the complaints and the regulations involved.

This strategy is used in political episodes fifteen times, fourteen of which are used by the interviewees, and once by the interviewer. The next extract illustrates this strategy:

Interviewer: ...the truth is India's changed massively, and at times you don't seem prepared to acknowledge that.

Brinda Karat: Well, no. We're very much part of a chain. So it's not a question of change.

Interviewer: *You haven't changed at all as you told me at the beginning of this interview.

Brinda Karat: @ India's changing.

Interviewer: Your heart and beliefs haven't changed an inch?

Brinda Karat: **Well, no. Your beliefs may not change, but it doesn't mean that we don't want to change the terrible circumstances that our people live in.** So, most definitely? we're changing. Society is changing.

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 18/10/2005)

The interviewer is asking Brinda Karat, Head of India's Marxist Party, if her Marxist beliefs have changed because she said at the beginning of the interview that they have not changed. She disagrees saying "*Well, no. Your beliefs may not change*", in which "*no*" is an explicit indicant of disagreement. Then, she says "*but it doesn't mean that we don't want to change the terrible circumstances that our people live in*", in which "*but*" signals a contradictory opinion that she wants to change to help her people, and this does not mean she does not want to change.

This strategy is used in episodes dealing with social topics three times as in the coming extract:

Interviewer: ... the book is notoriously pretty. Eh, there's a lot of @ violence. It doesn't lead to a lot of happy things, I expect.

Alice Walker: **No, it doesn't, but uh, you know, when I think about 'The Color Purple', I don't think about violence. I think about people growing, and sometimes it hurts to grow....**

(Hard Talk Extra, BBC World, 14 /10 /2005)

The interviewer is telling Alice Walker, author of the novel '*The Color Purple*', that there is a lot of violence in her novel that leads to unhappy endings. So, she partly disagrees by saying "*No, it doesn't, but uh, you know, when I think about 'The Color Purple', I don't think about violence*", in which she uses the conjunction '*but*' that shows that she does not completely agree with the interviewer; however, she has a contradictory opinion which is that in her novel she does not think about violence, but about people growing, and that sometimes it hurts to grow. This strategy is mostly used in political episodes, followed by economic ones, and is least used in social episodes as table (5) below shows:

Table (5) The Frequency of using Prefaces in Television Talk Shows

nt Strategy	Political Episodes	Economic Episodes	Social Episodes
Prefaces	15	9	3

- Explicit Indicators of Disagreement

In this strategy, speakers use lexical items such as 'no', and sentences such as 'I disagree' and 'I don't believe that' to deny and/or contradict whatever is being asked or said. Using explicit indicators of disagreement is one of the most frequent and direct oppositional strategies.

Explicit indicators of disagreement are used in episodes dealing with economic topics thirty seven times, thirty six of which are used by the interviewees, and is used only once by the interviewer.

The following extract is a demonstration of this strategy:

Interviewer: Minister, OPEC seems to be getting an awful lot of the blame for the current crisis. Eh, the accusation pretty justified, isn't it?

Edmund Dackuru: **No, not at all justified.** I think we passed the stage of passive blame. We reached an era of cooperation because we have to look at it as a chain, a chain that starts from crude oil, producing it, and having it refined for the end user....

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 22/9/2005)

When asked if the accusations against OPEC because of high oil prices are true, the Nigerian Oil Minister, Edmund Dackuru, disagrees using the explicit indicant "no" which is asserted by the negative structure "*not at all justified*" followed by an elaboration of the reason that he disagrees because producing oil is a chain in which everybody is involved until it reaches the end consumer.

This strategy is also used in political episodes thirty seven times, thirty six of which are used by the interviewees, and is used by the interviewer only once. The following extract is a demonstration of this strategy:

Interviewer: ...You have the Irish Justice Minister Michael McDour talking about the criminality of the IRA which he said was perverting the democratic process, posing a frightening threat to Irish democracy. Now, you can get a much harsher words to say that.

Alex Reid: When did he say that?

Interviewer: He said in the past few months.

Alex Reid: Yeah.

Interviewer: Has repeatedly said them.

Alex Reid: **I totally disagree with him.** He's misreading the whole situation.

Interviewer: So, you think there's no criminality in the IRA?

Alex Reid: **No, no.**

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 13/10/2005)

Father Alex Reid, a supporter of the IRA, shows his disagreement with what the Irish Minister says that the criminality of the IRA is threatening the Irish democracy twice. In the first time, he uses the sentence "*I totally disagree with him*" in which the verb "*disagree*" is preceded by the adverb "*totally*" to intensify his disagreement. In the second time, he indicates that he does not believe in the criminality of the IRA by repeating "*no*" twice to emphasize what he is saying.

It has been noticed that explicit indicants of disagreements may be preceded by 'well' as in the following extract:

Interviewer: ...The truth is India's changed massively and at times you don't seem prepared to acknowledge that.

Brinda Karat: Well, no. We're very much part of a chain. So, it's not a question of change.

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 18/10/2005)

Brinda Karat, Head of India's Communist Party, refuses what the interviewer is telling her when he says that India has changed, and that Marxism is not suitable any more. She uses "no" preceded by the discourse marker "well". Pomerantz (1984) and Schiffrin (1992) assert that "well" is a turn initial component that usually precedes disagreements more than responses that express agreements.

Explicit indicants of disagreements are also used in social episodes nineteen times by the interviewees. The coming extract is a good illustration of this strategy:

Oprah: You want to know if he'd marry you?

Angela Parker: Yeah

Oprah: Getting an engagement ring wasn't enough?

Angela Parker: No, because it took forever.

(The Oprah Winfrey Show, MBC4, 12/9/2005)

In this part of the episode, Oprah is discussing with Angela Parker the problem that her fiancée is postponing their marriage. When Oprah asks her "Getting an

engagement ring was not enough?", Angela answers saying "no" followed by the reason which is that this step took a long time.

The frequency of using this strategy is equal in economic and political episodes, and is least used in social ones as table (6) below indicates:

Table (6) The Frequency of using Explicit Indicators of Disagreement in Television Talk Shows

Disagreement Strategy	Economic Episodes	Political Episodes	Social Episodes
Explicit Indicators of Disagreement	37	37	19

- Contradictory Assessments

Another common strategy to express disagreement used in the analyzed episodes is using contradictory assessments that are opposite to what the interviewer is saying or asking. In economic episodes, this strategy is used five times by the interviewees as in the following extract:

Interviewer: ...Do you think that there could be in the United States an oil price-driven recession?

Paul Krugman: Uh, I'm not sure recession is right at the moment. There's there's this kind of funny business. You ask people what's the price of gasoline doing to you, they say it's a devastating blow to any country finances. But, you don't see them actually cutting down spending very much.

(The world Debate, BBC World, 24/9/2005)

The issue discussed in the episode is that if there will be a recession in the economy of the United States because of high oil prices. When the interviewer asks the economist, Paul Krugman, "*Do you think that there could be in the United States an oil price-driven recession?*", the interviewee says "*I'm not sure recession is right at the moment*" in which he contradicts the interviewer because there is no recession in the American economy. The interviewee's contradictory assessment is followed by an explanation of the reason why he thinks his opinion is correct which is that in spite of high oil prices people are not decreasing their spending.

This strategy is also used in political episodes five times by the interviewees as in the next extract:

Interviewer: ...So when you look around the world today the model that you must take or the country you must feel sympathy with is North Korea?

Brinda Karat: **Well, you know, in our Party, the way our Party looks at the world, we haven't really based ourselves on models of other countries.** In fact, one of the demarcating features of our movement, led by the Marxist Party to which I belong, is precisely its independence.

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 18/10/2005)

Brinda Karat, Head of India's Marxist Party, answers a question about whether her Party adopts the beliefs of North Korea. So, she disagrees using the contradictory assessment "*Well, you know, in our Party, the way our Party looks at the world, we haven't really based*

ourselves on models of other countries" which contradicts what the interviewer is asking. Her contradictory assessment is preceded by "well" that usually precedes negative answers (Pomerantz 1984; Schiffrin 1992).

The same strategy is used four times in social episodes by the interviewees as in the following extract:

Interviewer: Some people say that the images they saw on television reminded them of slavery, seeing a lot of African Americans trapped in a way.

Wynton Marsallis: **Well, I don't think that this so much would remind them of slavery...It showed people stuck, and the government didn't help them the way it should've helped them.**

(Hard Talk Extra, BBC World, 30 /9/2005)

Wynton Marsallis, an American musician, begins his disagreement using "well", and then indicates his disagreement using the negative sentence "*I don't think that this so much would remind them of slavery*". This is followed by the contradictory assessment "*It showed people stuck, and the government didn't help them the way it should've helped them*". This shows that Marsallis contradicts what the interviewer is saying that seeing African Americans trapped in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina reminded some people of slavery. Marsallis contradiction reflects his point of view that what happened is totally an American domestic political matter because of the late arrival of governmental help to these areas, and it has nothing to do with slavery.

Using contradictory assessments is **one** of the least used strategies to signal disagreement. As **table (7)** below shows, this strategy is equally used in **economic** and **political** episodes, and the difference in the **frequency** of usage between them and **social** ones is very **little**.

Table (7) The Frequency of using Contradictory Assessments in Television talk Shows

Disagreement Strategy	Political Episodes	Economic Episodes	Social Episodes
Contradictory Assessments	5	5	4

- Interruptions and Overlaps

One of the most important concepts in conversational organization is **turn-taking**, which can either be cooperative or competitive. The **former** occurs at the end of a given linguistic unit such as a **lexical item**, a phrase, a clause, or a sentence. The latter, **which** is used in the analyzed episodes, signals **disagreement**. In the latter case also, one speaker mentions a given **viewpoint**, and to express disagreement, the other **speaker** begins his comment or answer in a competitive way. **To be able** to do this, interruptions and overlaps are used. According to Coates (1993:109):

Overlaps are instances of **slight** overanticipation by the next **speaker**. Instead of beginning to **speak** immediately following the **current** speaker's turn, next speaker **begins** to speak at the very end of **current**

speaker's turn, overlapping the last word or part of it. Interruptions, on the other hand, are violations of the turn-taking rules of conversation. Next speaker begins to speak while current speaker is still speaking, at a point in current speaker's turn which could not be defined as the last word. Interruptions break the symmetry of the conversational model. The interrupter prevents the speaker from finishing his turn, at the same time giving a turn for themselves.

In economic episodes, there are eight interruptions equally divided between the interviewers and the interviewees. In addition, there are also seven overlaps used by the interviewers. An example of the former strategy is the following extract:

Interviewer: Minister, OPEC seems to be getting an awful lot of the blame for the current crisis. Eh, the accusation pretty justified, isn't it?

Edmund Dackuru: No, not at all justified. I think we passed the stage of passive blame. We reached an era of cooperation because we have to look at it as a chain, a chain that starts from crude oil, producing it, and having it refined for the end user...proportion of production a[

Interviewer: [You said you don't want to describe the blame, but I have to interrupt here because we have European ministers,

we've had giants of industries who're saying "The prices are too high. OPEC do something about it", and you're doing something about it?

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 22/9/2005)

The issue discussed is high oil prices. The interviewer signals her disagreement of the fact that producing oil is a chain in which there are many stages, and each stage shares in the production process by interrupting the interviewee. She does not give him a chance to finish what he is saying and interrupts him saying "*You said you don't want to describe the blame...about it?*". Moreover, the interviewer marks her interruption explicitly to the interviewee saying "*but I have to interrupt here*".

An example of the latter strategy is the next extract:

Sadat AL-Husseini: Energy is a scarce resource which costs a lot of money to produce and bring to market. We've been underinvesting for eighteen years, and if you read the IEA world energy book for the last two or three years, they've clearly stated this, whether or not, politicians choose eh to read it and make it an issue for the consumers is something completely different.

Interviewer: So you're saying it's the politicians who're at fault for not encouraging pay to re*fine?

Sadat AL-Husseini: ***I'm saying that the problem of the cheap energy that we had for the last eighteen years or so has taken it off the political agenda. So, when it came back on the political agenda, it's come as a big shock, but there's no lack of international barriers for those who've been worrying that this would happen.**

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 22/9/2005)

The overlap “*I’m saying...political agenda*” is used by the interviewee at the very end of the interviewer’s turn to show his disagreement to what she says, and to present the truth of what he is saying from his point of view.

In political episodes, interruptions are used nineteen times, fourteen of which are used by the interviewers and the rest by the interviewees. Overlaps are used nine times, six of which are used by the interviewers and the rest by the interviewees. An example of the former strategy is the following extract:

Interviewer: We can’t talk about trials. We know well that Saddam Hussein used to be in complete control of the judges. He sent them 200 letters telling them I want this trial to take ten minutes. I want them shot afterwards.

Abd AL-Haq AL-‘Ani: That’s not true bec [

Interviewer: **[That’s justice?**

Abd AL-Haq AL’Ani: It took two years for these people between arrest and execution.

(*Hard Talk*, BBC World, 25/10/2005)

The speakers are discussing Saddam Hussein’s trial because of executing people in dejail. The interruption is used by the interviewer by asking “*That’s justice?*” to show that what Saddam Hussein did was not fair because, according to his information, the trials of the Iraqi villagers took only ten minutes. In this way, the interviewer indicates his disagreement to what AL-‘Ani is saying that it is not true that the trial of the villagers did not take ten minutes after which they were shot.

An extract to demonstrate the latter strategy is the next one:

Interviewer: ...the truth is India has changed massively, and at times you don't seem prepared to acknowledge that.

Brinda Karat: Well, we're very much part of a chain. So, it's not a question of cha*nge.

Interviewer: ***You haven't changed at all as you told at the very beginning of this interview.**

(Hard Talk, BBC World, 18/10/2005)

The overlap "*You haven't changed at all as you told at the very beginning of this interview*" is used by the interviewer and occurs at the very end of the interviewee's turn. Brinda Karat, Head of India's Marxist Party, is saying that her Party is a part of a chain, and therefore change is inevitable. So, the interviewer tells her that she is contradicting herself because at the beginning of the interview she said that her opinion has not changed.

In episodes dealing with social topics, two interruptions by the interviewers occur as well as two overlaps, one used by the interviewer and the other by the interviewee. An example of the former strategy is:

Oprah: Why do you keep the weight on? What's in it in you?

Trina: Interestingly enough, it's a comfort. You know, when you go to the club or you go with your friends, you

know, you can be who you just wanna be. You can be the fun, happy, funny girl.

Oprah: Yeah. May I say this is one crazy answer?

Trina Jackson: And you don't have to worry about getting hit on by the guys. It's never a temptation on whether or not it's gonna happen, cheat on your happen cause they're not knocking on my door, you know. It's Ok.

Oprah: That's that's a crazy answer. @ May I say this is one crazy answer? What in the world are you talking about? You don't want to cheat o your husband just because people [

Trina Jackson: [No, you get out of the line of temptation.

(The Oprah Winfrey Show, MBC4, 10/9/2005)

Trina Jackson, the interviewee, is saying that she does not want to lose weight so as not to cheat on her husband because this keeps the temptation away. The interruption used by Trina "No, you get out of the line of temptation" occurs just before the interviewer finishes her sentence to signal her disagreement with what Oprah says that she keeps the weight to keep on to be faithful to her husband. In the interruption, Trina indicates that she keeps the weight only to get out of the line of temptation.

An example to demonstrate the latter strategy is the following:

Trevor Jackson: ...You have the vision that you go running down the beach (p), you know, eh 10 years after you're married.*

Oprah: *Running down the beach.

(The Oprah Winfrey Show, MBC4, 10/9/2005)

Oprah uses the overlap “*running down the beach*” to indicate her disagreement and surprise that one of the causes of the problem between Trevor and Trina, the interviewees, is that he has this image of running down the beach with her ten years after they are married which they cannot do because she is fat. It is worth mentioning that this overlap said by Oprah is a repetition of what Trevor says. This emphasizes Oprah’s surprise and disagreement.

It has been noticed that interruptions and overlaps mostly occur in political episodes, followed by economic ones, and are least used in social episodes. Table (8) below illustrates the frequency of using interruptions and overlaps in economic, political, and social episodes.

Table (8) The Frequency of using Interruptions and Overlaps in Television Talk Shows

Strategy	Political Episodes	Economic Episodes	Social Episodes
Interruptions	19	8	2
Overlaps	9	7	2

Politeness, Power, and Gender Differences and their Relationship to the Agreement and the Disagreement Strategies Used

After investigating the agreement and the disagreement strategies used by the participants in the analyzed television talk shows, it is important to decide on the principles that govern their choices of these strategies. Politeness principles have been studied by many linguists as indicated before. According to Brown

and Levinson (2004:331), there are three factors that determine the level of politeness, which are:

1. The social distance (D) of the speaker and the listener.
2. The relative power (P) of the speaker and the listener.
3. The absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture.

It has been noticed in the analyzed episodes that power is the most important factor in the interactional process. The interviewers are all very famous figures as well as the interviewees. This applies to *Hard Talk*, *Hard Talk Extra*, *Have Your Say*, and *The World Debate*. In the case of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, the interviewees are both ordinary people who have some social problem as well as experts who can help these people in solving their problems. Generally, except for *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, both the interviewers and the interviewees enjoy equal power because of their highly prestigious status in their fields of specialization that enable them to deal with the sensitive nature of the topics raised in these episodes, and thus they speak with great confidence and authority. The interviewers control the course of the interview as they select the topic to be discussed in the episodes. They can also sometimes challenge the interviewees directly whenever they feel that the interviewees' answers are not satisfactory for them through any of the disagreement strategies. It has been noticed that the interviewees use more agreements and disagreements than the interviewers, except for back-channels to indicate agreement, which are mostly equally used by the

interviewers and the interviewees, and interruptions to signal disagreement, which are used more by the interviewers. The interviewers use a lesser number of disagreements than the interviewees for the sake of politeness. The interviewees are also powerful in the sense that they are the ones who have the information that the interviewers need. They can provide the information, and at the same time keep it away if they choose to do so. Hence, they can agree and/or disagree freely without restrictions. In the case of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, which includes both experts and ordinary people, the former speak with authority on the social problems raised by the latter. The former also mention their experiences, whether personal or professional, as a sort of guidance for the latter. That is why their contributions are usually lengthier than the latter. Another important thing is that the experts usually control and manage the contributions of the ordinary people, and thus they enjoy more power, and therefore they agree and disagree freely more than the ordinary people who use more agreements than disagreements for the sake of politeness because they are the ones who need solutions for their problems.

It is agreed that indicating agreement is a positive politeness strategy that aims at preserving the face of the listener, and at the same time indicates solidarity and support among the participants. This is the reason for the large number of agreements expressed in the analyzed episodes. The number of disagreements is very few compared to the number of agreements, and this signals respect between the interviewers and the interviewees as

well as their mutual desire not to offend each other as they are authoritative in their fields of specialization.

In relation to gender and power, Coates (1993: 130) maintains that in conversations, females use politer forms as they think that males are superior. As for the agreement and disagreement strategies, it has been found that both males and females use the same strategies. So, the strategies preferred by males and females to express agreement and disagreement are not really related to gender, but to the power of the participants and their professional and social status.

Conclusion

After analyzing the seven hours of television talk shows in economic, political, and social fields, it has been noticed that to show agreement participants use repetition, upgraded agreement, explicit indicants of agreement, and back-channels. To express disagreement, participants use prefaces, explicit indicants of disagreement, contradictory assessments as well as interruptions and overlaps. It has also been noticed from the eight tables included that the total number of agreements exceeds that of disagreements for the sake of politeness. The former is used four hundred and two times, while the latter is used one hundred and eighty times. Moreover, the interviewers use a smaller number of disagreements than the interviewees because the latter have the information that the former need, to be polite, and because agreement is a preferred positive politeness strategy, while disagreement is a dispreferred negative politeness one. Based on the frequency counts included in

the eight tables in the study, it has become clear that in relation to the agreement strategies used, in economic and political episodes, the most commonly used strategy is back-channels followed by explicit indicants of agreement, upgraded agreement, and repetition, respectively. Concerning social episodes, the most commonly used strategy is back-channels followed by explicit indicants of agreement, repetition, and upgraded agreement, respectively. In relation to the disagreement strategies used, in economic episodes, the most commonly used strategy is explicit indicants of disagreement followed by prefaces, interruptions, overlaps, and contradictory assessments, respectively. In political episodes, the most commonly used strategy is explicit indicants of disagreement followed by interruptions, overlaps, and prefaces, respectively. The frequency of using contradictory assessments is equal to that of prefaces. In social episodes, the most commonly used strategy is explicit indicants of disagreement followed by contradictory assessments, prefaces, and interruptions. The frequency of using interruptions is equal to that of overlaps. As indicated before, Brown and Levinson (2004: 331) maintain that the level of politeness is determined by three factors, namely the social distance among speakers, their relative power, and the absolute ranking of impositions in a given culture. After careful consideration, it turned out to be that the most important factor in relation to television talk shows is that of the power of participants. In the analyzed episodes, it has become obvious that both the interviewers and the interviewees enjoy equal power because each is

prominent in his/her field, except for *The Oprah Winfrey Show* that includes both experts and ordinary people, the former have more power than the latter, thus they agree and disagree freely and use more disagreements than agreements, while the latter use more agreements than disagreements.

As for the relationship between gender and power, it has been noticed that both males and females use the same agreement and disagreement strategies. This shows that using these strategies is not related to gender, but to the professional and social status of speakers as they are all prominent figures in their fields of specialization.

Appendix

Transcription Conventions

- [Interruptions
- * Overlaps
- ... Unimportant speech
- @ Unclear speech
- (p) Pause
- ? Rising intonation
- Extracts in bold type indicate the focus of analysis

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