DEMYSTIFYING WOMEN'S AND MEN'S TALK IN MARITAL INTERACTIONS

DESMISTIFICANDO A FALA DE MULHERES E HOMENS EM INTERAÇÕES ENTRE CASAIS

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Abstract: Former studies on gender and language sustained a male-female binary dichotomy (FISHMAN, 1978; FISHMAN, 1983; TANNEN, 1990; DE FRANCISCO, 1991). They stated that women tend to engage more in conversations in comparison to men, talk more and produce continuers such as 'mhm' to offer support to narratives. On the other hand, men tend not to engage in conversations as much as women, talk less and produce continuers in order to silence their interactional partners. Nonetheless, more recent research has rejected the idea of having a male-female dichotomy as a starting point to analyze language data. (SCHEGLOFF, 1997; WEATHERALL, 2000; SWANN, 2002; FREED, 2008). They believe gender is context bound and locally constructed. The objective of this study is to investigate women's and men's talk in marital interactions in Brazil from the perspective of talk-in-interaction studies. The analyzed data derive from recorded conversations among two heterosexual couples aged between 24 - 32 years old who had been living together for 2-3 years by the time of the data collection. The data was transcribed according to Jefferson (1984) and analyzed considering four analytical categories proposed by De Francisco (1991) to verify their application: (a) production of second pair parts; (b) topic initiation; (c) use of continuers; and, (d) talking time. As claimed by more recent studies on language and gender, the results indicate that the interactional strategies used by the analyzed couples are not related to pre-established gender categories, but negotiated moment by moment in the interaction.

Keywords: Language and Gender. Couples' interactions. Interactional strategies. Talk-in-interaction.

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Resumo: Estudos tradicionais sobre gênero e linguagem têm sustentado a dicotomia binária entre homens e mulheres. (FISHMAN, 1978; FISHMAN, 1983; TANNEN, 1990 e DE FRANCISCO, 1991). Eles afirmam que, em comparação aos homens, as mulheres tendem a falar mais e a produzir continuadores como "mhm", a fim de oferecer suporte às narrativas. Por outro lado, os homens demonstram um menor engajamento em conversas, tendem a falar menos e a produzir continuadores com o intuito de silenciar as suas parceiras interacionais. No entanto, pesquisas mais recentes rejeitam a dicotomia homem-mulher como ponto de partida para a análise de dados interacionais. (SCHEGLOFF, 1997; WEATHERALL, 2000; SWANN, 2002; FREED, 2008). Esses autores acreditam que gênero é localmente construído e atrelado ao contexto. O objetivo deste estudo é investigar interações matrimoniais no Brasil, pela perspectiva dos estudos de fala-em-interação. Os dados advêm de conversas gravadas entre dois casais heterossexuais, com idade entre 24 – 32 anos e que, na época da coleta de dados, estavam casados há 2-3 anos. Os dados foram transcritos de acordo com Jefferson (1984) e analisados considerando quatro categorias analíticas propostas por De Francisco (1991), com o intuito de verificar a sua aplicação: a) produção da segunda parte do par adjacente; b) iniciação de um novo tópico; c) uso de continuadores; e, d) tempo de fala. Conforme apontado pelos estudos mais recentes na área de gênero e linguagem, os resultados revelam que as estratégias interacionais utilizadas pelos casais pesquisados não estão atreladas a categorias pré-estabelecidas de gênero, e sim, negociadas a todo o momento na interação.

Palavras-chave: Linguagem e Gênero. Interações entre casais. Estratégias interacionais. Fala-em-Interação Social.

1 Introduction

People make use of language in order to do actions such as asking and answering questions, agreeing and disagreeing, selling and buying, just to mention a few. Over the years, many scholars stated that the use interlocutors make of language to act in the world is closely related to the gender of the participants (FISHMAN, 1983; DE FRANCISCO, 1991; TANNEN, 1990). In other words, being a man or a woman influences in the way people speak.

However, more recent work on this area of study questions the idea of considering gender as a pre-established category in the analysis of women's and men's interactions when it is not clearly made relevant to the participants in the conversation. (SCHEGLOFF, 1997; WEATHERALL, 2000; SWANN, 2002; FREED, 2008). In order to better understand couple's interactions in Brazil, this paper analyses audio recorded conversations between two married heterosexual couples from the perspective of talk-in-interaction studies. We aim to investigate if gender is made relevant in their use of language. With this work, we hope to fill in a gap on marital interactions studies with Brazilian Portuguese data, as we have no news of similar previous research in this language. We start by offering a brief overview of the literature on language and gender. We, then, move forward to the analysis of the data and finish by summing up our findings and suggesting some ideas for future research in the area.

2 Gender and language studies

There is a vast collection of studies on gender issues from a variety of perspectives, since many researchers have been looking into this field of study. Linguistics has also contributed with an array of research on gender and the use of language, specially focusing on men's and women's conversations. (FISHMAN, 1983; DE FRANCISCO, 1991; TANNEN, 1990; SCHEGLOFF, 1997; WEATHERALL, 2000; SWANN, 2002; FREED, 2008). While some defend the male and female dichotomy (FISHMAN, 1983; DE FRANCISCO, 1991; TANNEN, 1990), others invest in the deconstruction of these two pre-established categories. (SCHEGLOFF, 1997; SWANN, 2002). A discussion of these studies is offered below.

2.1 In proof of a male vs. female dichotomy

Many linguists have addressed their studies on couples' interactions (FISHMAN, 1983; DE FRANCISCO, 1991; TANNEN, 1990) to show, through the analysis of naturally occurring data, how participants co-construct power relations.

Fishman (1983) recorded and analyzed interactions between three couples. She found the first power relations display right at the beginning of the data collection: in all of the three couples, the men were the ones who would turn the tape recorders on and sometimes even without the women's knowledge.

For the author, power relations is more than forcing someone to do something; it is the ability of imposing what is right or wrong. In her analysis, she shows how couples' hierarchical relations are co-constructed and maintained through language. She claims that women make more questions than men, therefore, initiating more topics. She also shows that both interactants produce minimal responses such as 'mhm', 'huh' and 'yeah', yet, for different purposes. While men use minimal responses to display lack of interest, women use them to do 'support work' while their partners are talking. For her, even though women raise more topics than men, less than half of the topics raised are expanded. In contrast to that, almost one hundred per cent of the topics raised by men succeed.

Based on Fishman's (1983) paper, De Francisco (1991) presents a discussion on how men silence women in marital relations. For that, she recorded seven American couples, aging from 21 to 63 years old, who had been living together for 2 - 35 years. Although De Francisco (1991) based her paper on Fishman's (1983) study, she added a private interview with each

one of the participants, as she stated that Fishman (1983) omitted an important source of information: "the individual speaker's view". (DE FRANCISCO 1991, p. 176).

According to De Francisco (1991), men tend to do more turn-taking violations, such as being silent, making use of continuers (e.g. 'mhm' and 'yeah') and interrupting more persistently than women do. For her, men use these strategies as a way of detouring women's topic and responses. For all the analysis provided, only one excerpt of a conversation is presented. In the data, the woman raised seven topics, yet only five of them were expanded; in contrast, the man raised four topics and all of them were successful. As to the efforts of maintaining the conversation going, such as talking more, raising more topics and having far less turn-taking violations, women are considered to struggle more in the interactions.

According to De Francisco (1991), when having the private interviews and reflecting on their interactions, the female participants noted that their husbands were patronizing them. This happened when they articulated their voices to explain things, and when their husbands were not interested in their topics and started to make sexual or romantic comments, for instance. In addition, one of the women felt as if she was being taught by her husband, when he slowed his speech and articulated the words more carefully, similar to the way adults talk to children.

The author concludes stating that her intention was neither to say that men were bad communicators nor to emphasize stereotypes.

> I am not trying to suggest that the men in this study failed to value talk at all, or that the stereotypical 'silent male' is a universal phenomenon. However, the men consistently preferred 'not talking' and/or 'light conversation' in their continual vigilance for conflict avoidance". (DE FRANCICSO, 1991, p. 181).

She affirms that, in the end, what men and women want is to avoid conflict; however, they make use of different strategies to do that. While men talk less, make more violations and patronize, women believe in producing a considerable amount of talk to avoid trouble.

Another study on couples' interaction was developed by Tannen (1990), which shows women-men asymmetries in talk. She presents many examples of couples' interactions and her claims regard women's frustration as to the way their partners respond to them. In one of the examples provided, the woman had undergone a surgery which changed her breast contour. She told two of her friends about it, and both of them reported the way they felt when they underwent a surgery. However, when she told it to her husband, instead of trying to build rapport, he suggested that she could have her scar covered up by undergoing a plastic surgery. With this example, the author assumes that the misunderstanding was caused because the

husband had taken the role of problem solver by giving her advice instead of trying to understand her.

Another example presented by Tannen (1990) is of a woman who was in pain at home just after returning from hospital. She had been on a car accident and was seriously injured. As a result of her complaints on her pain for having to move around, her husband said she should have stayed in hospital. The woman did not take her husband's contribution as a suggestion, but as a complaint, i.e., she thought her husband did not want her home.

In both situations, the women were frustrated with their husbands because of their lack of matching troubles. For that, Tannen states: "If women are often frustrated because men do not respond to their troubles by offering matching troubles, men are often frustrated because women do." (TANNEN, 1990, p. 504).

Tannen (1990) also affirms that women's idea of frustration is different from men's, and to support that, she shows an interaction in which the husband says he was tired for not having slept well, and in reply his wife says she did not sleep well either. Because of that, the man gets mad at the woman, as he thought she was belittling his trouble. The author also claims that men see themselves as trouble solvers and, in conversations, this is evident, since they are the ones who fix emotional troubles in interactions. As to this, she claims:

> Since many men see themselves as problem solvers, a complaint or a trouble is a challenge to their ability to think of a solution, just as a woman presenting a broken bicycle or stalling car poses a challenge to their ingenuity in fixing it. But whereas women appreciate help in fixing mechanical equipment, few are inclined to appreciate help in "fixing" emotional troubles." (TANNEN, 1990, p. 504, author's emphasis).

Tannen (1990) also claims that many men perceive the world as a hierarchical order, and for maintaining the position they want to be at, they must preserve their independence. Therefore, conversations for men seem to be a status negotiation. An example of that is the fact that men usually do not ask for information when they need it. According to Tannen (1990), this happens because when one needs information from another, the one who has the information sends a metamessage of superiority, especially if it comes from a woman to a man. She provides the example of a couple that was lost, but the man did not want to ask for information. Only after an hour, the man asked the woman if she knew a better way to get to the place and, although she had this information, she preferred to say that she would offer a certain direction, but there could be a better possibility she was not aware of. The author claims that the wife used this strategy to avoid a situation of power asymmetry with her husband.

In all the studies discussed above, the researchers focused on men's and women's role in the conversation as separate categories established a priori. We will present below research on men's and women's interactions which questions the idea of taking sex and gender as a starting point of analysis. (SCHEGLOFF, 1997; WEATHERALL, 2000; SWANN, 2002; FREED, 2008).

2.2 Deconstructing the male vs. female dichotomy

Schegloff (1997) questions to what extend it is justifiable, or even desirable, to invoke gender as an analytic category when it is not transparently relevant to participants engaging in an interaction. For him, scholars are imposing categories that preoccupy them onto data, while the analysis of gender should be done only when it is observably salient in participants' talk and conduct. For instance, when participants call attention to the use of the masculine pronoun because the sex of the subject is unknown, gender is explicitly relevant to be taken into account.

Swann (2002) also problematizes the way scholars have been analyzing language and gender. For the author, the analyses are usually on linguistic actions, as in the case of interruptions. However, linguistic actions differ according to the context. While some authors state that overlapping speech is a kind of interruption, others affirm that it might work as a supportive action.

Swann (2002) criticizes the dichotomy between men's and women's use of language discussing the use of tag questions through Lakoff (1975), Holmes (1984) and Cameron (1989). Lakoff (1975) states that women tend to use tag questions more often than men. Holmes (1984) shows that tag questions are used by both men and women, however, women's use of them can be interpreted as facilitative or supportive. In Cameron's (1989) study, tag questions have ambiguous interpretations, as they seem to have more than one function simultaneously. Swann (2002) reaffirms that the use of language depends upon the context, rather than male-female actions. For her, when we study language it is important to "[…] see meanings, or functions as relatively unstable, potentially ambiguous and heavily context-dependent." (SWANN, 2002, p. 553). Therefore, if language is context-dependent, it is not possible to state a priori that a certain linguistic action is used by women or men.

For Swann (2002) gender is constructed in context rather than fixed. According to her, gender, as language, has come to be seen as something more fluid or less well defined than it

once was stated to be. Also, gender is related to the construction of one's identity, so it is not correct to refer to a man as a male, since he might identify himself as female, for instance.

Freed (2008) also problematizes the idea of taking gender a priori in research and critizes Lakoff's (1973) *deficit theory* due to his conclusions on women's speech. For Lakoff, women's talk is ineffective, if compared to men's speech, and the reason for this is women's insecurity and lack of power.

Freed (2008) also opposes the *dominance theory* defended by Thorne and Henley (1975) and Fishman (1983). In these authors' studies, women are viewed and treated as unequal to men because of the norms of society, such as the division of labor. In this case, the powerful positions belong to men, while the less powerful ones are given to women.

Finally, Freed (2008) refers to the *difference theory,* represented in the works of Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990). In this framework, researchers believe that men and women use specific and distinct verbal strategies as a result of their development in same-sex childhood groups.

For Freed (2008) all these theories are limited and flawed, since they are almost exclusively characterized by the "problematization of women". For the idea that men and women speak differently, the author claims she could cite examples in which men speak the way women are expected to sound. As the author states:

> We can cite large numbers of examples in which men and boys talk the way "women" are expected to sound; similarly, we have determined that girls' and women's speech often fails to conform to the speech patterns that had been assumed. (FREED, 2008, p. 702, author's emphasis).

Freed (2008) claims that there are trends that emphasize the evidence of sex and gender differences. One is public perception. She asked her students to tell her how men and women talk. Among some other things, they said men use more curse language, while women use less, since girls are taught not to use it at all. But when she asked if students believed in what they had said, they replied they were merely reporting stereotypes.

Another trend Freed (2008) presents refers to the fear society has in terms of gender instability. As women and men are able to recreate themselves, people see stereotypes following apart. For example, transsexuals are much more common as they used to be, and so are pregnant women in their fifties. However, even though the common sense of sex is being deconstructed, the media keeps on enhancing the idea that men and women are different. The author does not disregard the differences between men and women, but she believes the

discrepancies are not simply based on sex. Rather, they are part of an ideology society insists on maintaining.

> The insistence on the authenticity and naturalness of sex and gender difference may be part of the ideological struggle to maintain the boundaries, to secure the borders, and to hold firm the belief in women and men as essentially different creatures." (FREED, 2008, p. 718).

We showed that earlier studies on women's and men's speech focused on differences between women's and men's talk as a starting point for analysis. They say that women tend to be more cooperative and usually get more involved and interested in conversations, among other things. In contrast to that, these studies claim that men are less interested in conversations, as they use more hesitations, make more 'incorrect' use of grammar and use more curse language in comparison to women. We also discussed that more recent research claims that the use of language depends upon a plenty of factors apart from gender, in other words, the way people use language is not correlated with gender or sex.

In the next section, we will present the analytical perspective used for our analysis and the data collection procedures.

3 Talk-in-Interaction and data collection

The analysis provided in this article was conducted following the perspective of the talk-in-interaction studies, which will be briefly explained below. Also, a description of the participants and the process of data collection will be given.

3.1 Talk-in-Interaction

Conversations are part of people's lives. To talk is one of the common actions people perform to get things done such as asking, complaining, agreeing/disagreeing, among others. (HUTCHBY and WOOFFITT, 2001). The perspective of talk-in-interaction studies is to look at the use people make of language to act in the world. For that, it analyses the sequentiality of naturally occurring conversations, that is, conversations that occur among people to conduct their everyday lives without the presence of a researcher.

For the analysis, conversations are audio/video recorded, and then, transcribed. While doing the analysis, the researcher looks at the sequence of actions from an emic perspective,

i.e., not from the researcher's perspective, but from the participants'. (HUTCHBY and WOOFFITT, 2001).

As conversations are organized in sequences, people follow rules while talking. These sequences are organized in turns which are produced by speakers in a talk. The turns are composed by turn constructional units (TCUs). The work of the researcher is to analyze the actions performed by the interlocutors oriented to the participants' TCUs.

3.2 Data

The data collected for this study was five hours of conversation audio recorded between March and August of 2014 and transcribed according to Jefferson (1984) (see Appendix A). In order to preserve the participants' identity a Term of Privacy was signed and the participants' names were changed. The participants were given a recorder and asked to turn it on when they were both present and willing to do so. They had the right to erase recordings or turn off the device at any time, but no interactions were erased. The participants said they became comfortable with the recorder and that the conversations represented their daily interactions. One of the couples recorded their interactions at home while the other did it in the car on the way home from work. None of the participants were told about the researcher's focus of analysis so as not to influence their behaviors/actions.

3.3 Participants

Lucas (26) and Camila (24) had been married for three years at the time of the data collection. Lucas was a production engineer and worked for a multinational company. Camila was an undergraduate student of Physical Education and taught elementary school kids. Some days of the week Lucas left work and picked up Camila in her job. In those days, they decided to record their interactions in the car.

Fabrício (32) and Denise (27) had been married for 2 years and had an 8-year-old daughter who lived with them, together with Fabrício's father. Fabrício was a computer systems analyst and worked for a multinational company. Denise was a housewife. She was in charge of taking their daughter to school and doing home chores. Their interactions were all recorded at home when Fabrício arrived from work.

Fabrício was developing a new software for ordering food online. He had been working on the device for months at the time of the recordings, and he seemed to be excited

about it. Their interactions happened in the dining room, while Fabrício was working on the software in front of a computer.

4 Data analysis

In order to check the reliability of the studies which argue that the use of language is closely related to participants' sex and gender, we conducted our analysis based on some of De Francisco's (1991) categories of analysis. For her: (a) men tend to do more turn-taking violations such as being silent and/or making use of continuers (e.g. 'mhm' and 'yeah'); (b) men interrupt more to detour women's topic and responses; (c) women raise more topics, but are less successful in expanding them; (d) women struggle more in interactions to maintain the conversations by talking more, raising more topics and making far less turn-taking violations.

Our analysis will be based in the following analytical categories: (a) production of second pair parts in adjacency pair sequences; (b) topic initiation; (c) use of continuers; and, (d) talking time.

4.1 Production of the second pair part in adjacency pair sequences

For Schegloff (2007), adjacency pairs are composed of two turns, uttered by different speakers (one after the other), are relatively ordered and pair-part related. The first pair-part initiates a sequence such as asking a question and making an announcement. It restricts what comes in the next turn, that is, the second pair part has to be related to the first.

The previously discussed studies on men's and women's interactions stated that men tend to do more turn violations by being silent and/or interrupting more often (DE FRANCISCO, 1991). However, the data in Excerpt 1 shows the wife, Denise, violating turn taking more than her husband, Fabrício.

Excerpt 1 – Fabrício and Denise

		°↑ah° tem que sair <u>bem</u> mais cedo.
537	FABRÍCIO:	*°↑oh° I gotta leave <u>quite</u> earlier.*
538		(2.3)
		eu já tô cansando >tem que acordá de madrugada<
539	FABRÍCIO:	*I'm tired >of waking up early in the morning<*
		pra abrir pro pai
540		*to open up for dad*
541		(1.7)

		>↑bá< vai ser muita mão.
542	FABRÍCIO:	>↑*gosh< that's gonna be tough*
543		(1.0)
		>tu me< ↑le::va?
544	FABRÍCIO:	>*can you<↑dri::ve me there?*
545		(3.2)
		aí eu ↑vo:lto.
546	FABRÍCIO:	*then I ↑dri:ve back.*

Fabrício and Denise are talking about their plans for the next day. He complains that he is tired of waking up earlier than he is used to because he has to open his father's business (lines 537-542). However, in lines 538, 541 and 543, Denise does not take the turn to provide any sort of TCU oriented to Fabrício's complaints. In line 544, Fabrício opens the first pair part of an adjacency pair by asking Denise if she can drive him to where he needs to go, but, once again, she remains silent and does not provide the second pair part to his request. After 3.2 seconds, Fabrício self-selects again.

By making a request (line 544), Fabrício makes the production of an answer relevant. According to Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), one of the features of conversations is that there is a relationship between turns. This relationship is called conditional relevance, so that a *greeting* makes relevant another *greeting*, for example. Therefore, Denise violated the turn-taking system by not providing the second pair part of the adjacency pair initiated by Fabrício.

Lucas and Camila show a different orientation to the sequentiality of their interaction, as can be seen in Excert 2.

Excerpt 2- Lucas and Camila

		ba:::h que loucura, mas passô a dor?
100	LUCAS:	*wo:::w that's crazy, but is the pain gone?*
101		(0.7)
		a<u>go::</u>ra passô, durante ali- enquanto ele tava fazendo eu-
102	CAMILA:	*no::w it is over, during – while he was doing that I-*
		eu quase chorava,
103		*I almost cried,*

Lucas and Camila are doing the accountability of the day, that is, they are catching up on what they did during the day, when they were not together. Camila is narrating what happened to her and Lucas is helping to co-construct the narrative.

She is telling him that she had a pain in her spine during the day. Then, after evaluating her problem (line 100), he offers the first pair part of an adjacency pair by asking

her if her pain is gone (line 100). After a pause of 0.7 seconds, Camila takes the turn responding to Lucas' question and proving extra information (lines 102-103).

Camila and Denise make different actions in the conversations they participate in. Denise does not provide the second pair part of the adjacency pair Fabrício opens, whereas Camila responds to the question Lucas makes and expands her sequence in the interaction.

During all the conversations recorded, Denise initiated 24 adjacency pair sequences and 23 of them were responded by Fabrício. On the other hand, Fabrício initiated 29 adjacency pair sequences and Denise provided the second pair part to only 19 of them. As for the other couple, Camila initiated 21 adjacency pair sequences and Lucas responded to 19 of them. Lucas initiated 25 adjacency pairs and Camila provided the second pair part to 22 of them. Therefore, the idea defended by De Francisco (1991), that men do more turn-taking violations than women, does not occur in these interactions. In this study, Denise and Camila are both women and while Camila does not provide the second pair of adjacency pairs only three times, Denise does not 19 times. Also, both men do the same kind of violation fewer times than the women.

4.2 Topic initiation

Speakers use topic initiations to promote the selection of 'mentionables' and shape the agenda of the conversation. (SCHEGLOFF and SACKS 1973, p.301). Topic initiation can be accomplished by different actions and grammatical formats. For example, a speaker may initiate a topic with a question or a statement (BARNES et al, 2013). If a topic initiation is to succeed, other participants must respond supportively. In the case of a question, one possible response would be an answer.

Raising topics in conversations is a more common action for women than for men, according to Fishman (1983) and De Francisco (1991). These authors also affirm that, when men initiate topics, one hundred per cent of them succeed, while women are less successful in this task. Let us see how that happens in our data in excerpt three.

Excerpt 3 – Denise and Fabrício

		onde ↑é que tu almoçô hoje,
472	DENISE:	*where ↑did you have lunch today,*
473		(1.7)
		com o ((nome omitido)) lá numa::: (.) no ((nome do lugar
474	FABRÍCIO:	*with ((omitted name)) there at this::: (.) at ((name of the place*
475		omitido))

		omitted))
476		(0.7)
		u:::m restaurantezinho °fu-° fulero °°em xxxxxxx°°
477	FABRÍCIO:	*a::: small °or-°ordinary restaurant °°at xxxxxxx°°*
478		(0.8)
		m
479	DENISE:	*m*
480		(14.0)
		não tem pro↑ble:ma eu ir lá fazê minha unha
481	DENISE:	*no ↑pro:blem if I go there to have my nails done*
		sá[bado]=
482		[satur]day=
		[↑nã:o.]
483	FABRÍCIO:	[↑no:o.]
		=de tarde,
484	DENISE:	=*in the afternoon,*
485		(.)
		mm (.) >não tem problema< nenhum.
486	FABRÍCIO:	*mm (.)>there is no problem< at all.*
487		(3.3)
		>porque daí< tu deve tá trabalhando nisso daí
488	DENISE:	*>because then< you will probably be working on that*
		também né.
489		*too right.*
490		(0.6)
		sim
491	FABRÍCIO:	*yeah*
492		(2.7)
		tu vai buscá o ((nome omitido))
493	DENISE:	*are you gonna pick up ((omitted name))*
494		(0.5)
		m↑hm
495	FABRÍCIO:	*m↑hm*
496		(1.4)
		amanhã?
497	DENISE:	*tomorrow?*
498		(1.4)
		vai ter que ↑ser né, (.) >vamô ter que sair
499	FABRÍCIO:	*it has to be ↑right, (.) >we'll have to leave on*
		sábado< (.) °de manhã.°
500		*saturday < (.) °morning.°*

Denise and Fabrício were talking about the software he was developing. In line 472, Denise initiates a new topic by asking Fabrício where he had lunch. Between lines 473 to 477, Fabrício replies to her question. Denise initiates a new topic (481-482 and 484), when she asks if there is any problem if she has her nails done on Saturday, and Fabrício responds to that promptly in overlap (line 483), and reinforces his position later (line 486). After a pause of 3.3 seconds (line 487), Denise provides what seems to be an account for having scheduled the manicure for that time, the fact that Fabrício is going to spend the day working on the software (lines 488-489). After a pause of 0.6 second (line 490) Fabrício agrees with Denise's assumption that he will be working (line 491). Then, after another pause of 2.7 seconds (line

492), Denise raises one more topic (line 493 and 497), which is responded affirmatively by Fabrício in line 495, and expanded a little further in lines 499-500.

In this interaction, Denise raised five topics, which were all taken by Fabrício. In other words, she succeeded in all her topic initiations. Fabrício did not raise any.

Lucas and Camila were also analyzed in terms of topic initiation.

Excerpt 4 – Lucas and Camila

742	CAMILA:	.h falando em ma↑gal o professor agora tava falando agora
		.h talking about we↑ird guys the teacher now was talking now
743		de:: (1.1) agora em- (.) hoje a aula foi mais de
		abo::ut (1.1) now about- (.) today's class was more about
744		patologi:as e ↑tal, .h como usar o pilates ↑pra::
		patho:logies and ↑so, .h how to use pilates ↑to::
745		(1.6)
746	LUCAS:	°ajudá°
		°help°
747		(0.7)
748	CAMILA:	↑é pra:: arrumá essas coisas. .hh aí:: (.) ele começo
		↑yeah to: fix these things...hh then (.) he started
749		a contá algumas histórias .hhh ele trabalhô um tempo
		to tell some stories. hhh he worked for some time
750		na polícia federal ele é carioca né >>trabalhava no
		at the federal police he is from Rio right >> worked in
751		Rio<<
		Rio
752		(.)
753	CAMILA:	na polícia do ↑rio
		in the Rio police
754	LUCAS:	↑m
		↑m
755		(.)
756	CAMILA:	e::::. (.) chegava os cara >ele falô< que uma vez chegô
		and... (.) the guys would come > he said< once came
757		um policial falando ((nome omitido)), não aguento mais
		a policeman saying ((omitted name)), I can't stand it anymore
758		mata
		killing
759		(.)
760	LUCAS:	hhh
		hhh
761	CAMILA:	aí ele achô que o cara ia abrir o cora↑ção falando que::
		then he thought the guy would open his ↑heart saying that::
762		.hã: fica ↑ma::l de[pois]
		.mm: he feels ↑ba::d [later]
763	LUCAS:	[sim]
		[*yeah*]
764	CAMILA:	lembra da cena >daí ele<
		he remembers the scene>then he<
765		↑bah o meu ombro {{rindo}} dói muito}
		↑oh my shoulder {{laughing}} hurts a lot}
766		[hahahahahaha]
		[*hahahahahaha*]
767	LUCAS:	[hahahahahaha] {{rindo} nossa que trágico.}
		[*hahahahahaha*] {{*laughing} gosh that is tragic.*}
768	CAMILA:	↑si:::m aí ele fez tempo de fisioterapia por

		↑ye:::ah then he did some physiotherapy sessions for
		xxxxxxxx e o cara vol↑tô
769		*xxxxxxxx and the guy came ↑back*
		hhhh=
770	LUCAS:	*hhhh=*
		=>ele trabalhava< no helicóptero ele falô que lá
771	CAMILA:	*=>he worked< on the helicopter and he said that there*
		é tri co<u>mum</u> >eles fazerem< a ↑ronda por cima do
772		*it is very common> they do <the ↑patrol over the*
		morro, (.) e:: se eles encontram alguém armado no
773		*hill, (.) and:: if they find someone with a gun in the*
		morro eles ↑matam.
774		*hill they ↑kill.*
775		(1.2)
		↑no::ssa
776	LUCAS:	*↑wo::w*

In this interaction, Camila initiates a topic (lines 742 to 744) to tell her husband, Lucas, a story her professor told in class. Lucas aligns with her talk and helps develop her storytelling by co-constructing her turn in line 746, by providing a lexical item, when she leaves her sentence unfinished for 1.6 second (line 745). While she sets the background for a story her teacher told in class (lines 748-751 and 753) and proceeds with the story (lines 756-758 and 761-762), he provides continuers to show listener's affiliation and encourage her to keep talking (lines 754, 760 and 763). When Camila reaches the climax of the story, which is the fact that the policeman couldn't stand killing anymore because of a pain in his shoulder, not because of moral reasons, (lines 764-765), she laughs at her own story (line 766). Then, Lucas affiliates, once again, by laughing too and providing an assessment of the fact told by her (lines 767). After that, when she resumes her story (lines 768-769 and 771-774), he keeps displaying attention by producing more continuers (line 770) and assessing the story again, showing surprise (line 776).

During all the conversations recorded, Denise raised 16 topics and 15 were developed by Fabrício. Fabrício raised 19 topics and Denise expanded only 11. As to Lucas and Camila, she raised 7 topics while Lucas raised 9. All topics raised by both were successful. Therefore, the claim that women tend to raise more topics than men and that men tend not to develop women's topics proves wrong in these interactions.

4.3 The use of continuers

In this conversation between Denise and Fabrício, he is telling her his plans concerning the software he is developing.

Excerpt 5 - Fabrício and Denise

221	FABRÍCIO:	>então a gente diz assim ↑ó (.) >a tele entrega<
		>then we say it like ↑this (.) >the delivery<
222		custa caro pra ti porque po::de entendê er↑ra::do
		it is expensive for you because you mi::ght understand it ↑wro::ng
223		não sei o ↑que dá aquele problema todo (.) entende.
		I don't know ↑why there's all that problem (.) you know?
224		(0.8)
225	FABRÍCIO:	>então< tu começa a direcioná esses caras da
		>so< you start to direct these guys from the
226		tele en↑tre:ga (>>o que a gente tá querendo<<)
		de↑livery (>>to what we want<<)
227		pro que fome (0.5) a entrega, pela web,
		to 'que fome' (0.5) the delivery, through the web,
228		(1.6)
229	FABRÍCIO:	aí >que que< a gente consegue com isso
		then >what<do we get from this
230		(1.3)
231	FABRÍCIO:	que o cli- o::: restau↑ra:nte, (.) acaba nos
		that the cust- the::: ↑restaura:nt, (.) ends up by
232		conseguindo os clientes,
		getting us the customers,
233		(0.7)
234	FABRÍCIO:	entende.
		got it.
235		(1.5)
236	FABRÍCIO:	ele mesmo faz a propaganda de ↑gra:ça
		it will do the marketing ↑for fre:e

In this interaction, Fabrício is explaining to Denise his strategies to convince the owners of the restaurants to buy his software. He says that delivery is expensive and there might be some misunderstandings with the traditional ways of delivering food (lines 221-223). In the end of his turn, he opens the first pair part of an adjacency pair by asking Denise if she understands what he means, as a request for confirmation. However, Denise does not respond to it in line 224, where there is a pause of 0.8 second. Then, in line 225, Fabrício takes the turn again and keeps explaining how his software will work in restaurants (lines 225-227). After another 1.6 second pause, in line 228, he self-selects again, and goes on talking, inviting Denise to guess his strategies and co-construct his story. She does not accept his invitation, leaving another 1.3 second pause, in line 230. Fabrício, then, volunteers the information (lines 231-232), and as Denise does not proffer any comments, after a 0.7 second pause (line 233), he checks her understanding again (line 234). As she remains silent (line 235), he closes the story proving its highlight; the fact that the restaurants will be advertising his service for free (line 236).

Besides not providing the second pair parts of the adjacency pairs opened by Frabício (lines 223, 229 and 234), Denise does not produce any continuers in this interaction to signal

to Fabrício that she was paying attention to what he was saying. Stivers (2008) discusses the importance of the use of continuers to show alignment when a speaker is telling a story.

> When a recipient aligns with a telling, he or she supports the structural asymmetry of the storytelling activity: that a storytelling is in progress and the teller has the floor until story completion. Disaligned actions undermine this asymmetry by competing for the floor or failing to treat a story as either in progress or—at story completion—as over. Thus, alignment is with respect to the activity in progress. (STIVERS, 2008, p. 34).

Therefore, in excerpt 5, Denise does not align with Fabrício at all while he is speaking. She does not produce any continuers and leaves the adjacency pairs proposed by him open. These violations contradict Fishman's (1983) statement that women tend to use continuers to support their husbands' talk.

In the next excerpt, Lucas is telling Camila a theft that took place in his company.

Excerpt 6 – Lucas and Camila

441	LUCAS:	{{*bocejando}* bah nem sabe} (.) semana passa- >acho que {{*yawning} guess what}* (.) last wee - >I think
442		foi< semana passa:da, >↑não< (.) essa semana mandaram um *it was <la:st week,> ↑no< (.) this week they sent an*
443		email dizendo que sumiu um <u>no:</u>te de uma mesa, *email saying that a no:tebook disappeared from a desk*
444	CAMILA:	.HHHH *.HHHH*
445		(1.1)
446	LUCAS:	e::: aí o pessaol de: .h de f- >mandô-< o pessoal do rh *and... then the people from .h from f- >sent-< the hr people*
447		mandô e↑ma::il dizendo assim que:: que ↑ah sumiu um *sent an e↑ma::il saying tha::t that ↑mm disappeared a*
448		note que tava sendo configurado- um note <u>no:</u>vo (.) *notebook that was being set up- a <u>bra:nd</u> new notebook (.)*
449		>que estava sendo configurado< pelo pessoal de <u>i:</u>nfra .hhh *>that was being set up <by the people from <u>i:</u>nfra .hhh*
450		e::e:: *a::nd a::nd.*
451	CAMILA:	°capaz°= *°really°=*
452	LUCAS:	=tal é- pedindo pra que: quem pegô (.) devo:lva *=so yeah- asking tha:t whoever took it (.) give it ba:ck*
453		mesmo que anonimamente deixe em algum lugar .hh e <u>tal</u>= *even anonymously leave it somewhere and so=*
454	CAMILA:	=bá, *=wow,*
455	LUCAS:	na::da >>de se manifestá<< daí eu achei ↑não beleza *no::thing >>no manifestation<<then I though ↑no ok*
456		o ca- .hhh só que aí: tipo- aí eu fui até falá com o *the guy- .hhh but the:n: like- then I even went to talk to*
457		((nome omitido)) falei com a mulher do rh:: >e eu achei< *((omitted name)) talked to the woman from hr>and I thought<*
458		>>↑bah será que foi sem querê<< alguém confundiu, .hh *>>↑oh maybe it was unintentionally<<someone got confused, .hh*
459		>>mas era<< um note <u>no:</u>vo, <u>tri</u> bom pro:: gerente do

	>>but it was<< a <u>ne:w</u> notebook, <u>really</u> good fo::r the manager
	comercial,
460	*of the commercial,*

Lucas is telling Camila that a notebook disappeared from one of the desks in his company (lines 441-443). In line 444, Camila provides an aspiration in loud voice, which shows surprise and, at the same time, shows to Lucas she is paying attention to his story. Lucas proceeds with the story (lines 446-450) saying that the Human Resources department of his company notified the employees by email, concerning the notebook. Then, Camila aligns with him, once again (line 451), by showing surprise, and encouraging Lucas to keep speaking. Lucas keeps telling the story (lines 452-453), and Camila, again, seems to be surprised by the facts she hears (line 454). Lucas, then, moves on and finishes his telling (lines 455-460). Camila cooperates with Lucas's story telling by producing continuers and assessing the facts being narrated.

Fishman (1983) and De Francisco (1991) state that the action of not providing continuers and/or providing them as a way of detouring the current speaker's turn is a men's action, that is, they are the ones who tend not to show alignment in conversation. However, excerpts 3 and 4 prove differently. While Camila provides plenty of continuers, affiliating with her husband, Denise, does not provide any. This fact proves that gender should not be taken as a pre-category of analysis for showing (des)alignment in interactions.

4.4 Talking time

This section will look at participants' amount of talking time. The following excerpt is an interaction between Denise and Fabrício.

Excerpt 7 – Fabrício and Denise

		en↑tão (.) esses problemas todos são resol<u>vi</u>dos
274	FABRÍCIO:	*th↑en (.) all these problems are <u>solved</u>*
		pelo que fome,
275		*by que fome*
276		(0.8)
		°entende°
277	FABRÍCIO:	*°you know°*
278		(0.5)
		aí a nossa ideia é te- é:: é:: tes↑tá com eles,
279	FABRÍCIO:	*then our idea is to te- is::is:: to ↑test with them,*
		com alguns >restaurantes< pra ver se a gente
280		*with some >restaurants< to see if we*
		consegue (.) é:: faz- (.) fazê >da melhor< forma
281		*can (.) mm::do- (.) do >the best< way*

282		de explicá isso pro re- pro restaurante >aí< o
		to explain this to the re- to the restaurant > then< the
283		restaurante começá a agir em cima disso. (.) aí tem
		restaurant starts working on this. (.) then there are
284		várias ações >>xxxxxxxxxxxx xx xxxxxxxxxx<<
		many actions >>xxxxxxxxxxxx xx xxxxxxxxxx<<
285		(0.8)
		ã:::
286	FABRÍCIO:	*m:::*
287		(1.3)
		a gente pode instruir o cara da tele entrega,
288	FABRÍCIO:	*we can teach the delivery guy*
		a:: que atende, (.) a fa↑lá sobre o que fome (.) °↑ah° o
289		*tha::t answers the phone, (.) to ↑talk about que fome (.) °↑ah° the*
		senhor pode entrá no que fome >>lãlãlã<< no
290		*you could browse que fome>> blablabla<<in the*
		próximo pedido, (.) entendeu?
291		*next order, (.) got it?*
292		(0.5)
		↑ba::rra o nome da pizzaria,
293	FABRÍCIO:	*↑blo::cks the name of the pizzeria*
294		(0.6)
		ã:::: quando for a <u>piz</u>za lá ou qualquer en-
295	FABRÍCIO:	*m... when the pizza is sent there or any addre -*
		ou a en↑trega, o lanche o ↑xis, (.) mandá u::m
296		*or the de↑livery, the snack the ↑cheeseburger (.) send a::*
		alguma coisa do que fome junto, um ↑flyer alguma
297		*send together something about que fome, a ↑flyer some*
		coisa assim. entende,
298		*something like this. you know,*
299		(0.8)

Fabrício explains to Denise the benefits the application he is developing will offer to restaurants which buy it. He says that the problem of not being able to answer different calls in a landline phone (previous lines) will be solved with the app he has developed (lines 274-275). However, Denise does not provide any alignment tokens at all in this excerpt. Since she remains silent, he asks for a receipt token in line 277. As he gets no response, after a 0.8 second pause, he self-selects and tries to check Denise's understanding (line 278). Following another silence of 0.5 second (line 278), he resumes his talk (lines 279-284) and goes on with his explanations (lines 288-291, 293 and 295-298).

As Denise does not participate actively in the conversation since she does not respond to the adjacency pairs Fabrício opens (lines 277, 291 and 298), nor does she align with him by providing continuers (lines 276, 278, 285, 287, 292, 294 and 299), he struggles to keep the conversation going. In other words, he invests in the topic he proposed before. The action of struggling more to keep the conversation going is said to be what women do, according to Fishman (1983), De Francisco (1991) and Tannen (1990); however, the data presented here shows that the husband, Fabrício, is the one who invests in expanding the topics.

In the following interaction, Camila is telling Lucas a problem she had in the fitness center she goes to.

Excerpt 8 – Lucas and Camila

		aí:::: (.) ela paga um aluguel <u>tri</u> ↑caro,
43	CAMILA:	*the::::n (.) she pays a very ↑expansive rent,*
44		(1.0)
		pra::: qualquer coisinha ser motivo- tirarem ela
45	CAMILA:	*for::::.any simple reason - they move her*
		de lá entendeu,
46		*from there you know,*
		sim
47	LUCAS:	yeah
48		(.)
		então:: esse <u>mês</u> a gente::: (.) teve que::: treiná
49	CAMILA:	*so:: this <u>month</u> we::: (.) had to::: train*
		em outras <u>sa</u>las umas cinco seis vezes,
50		*in other <u>rooms</u> like five or six times,*
51		(.)
		↑bah tem que des- tinha que descontá [isso aí.]
52	LUCAS:	*↑oh they must dis-had to discount [this.]*
		[↑é: daí]
53	CAMILA:	*[↑ **yeah: then**]*
		(ia ver) não vai pa↑gá:: o que tem que ser,
54		*(they would see) not ↑pa::y what it has to be,*
55		(0.6)
		sim=
56	LUCAS:	***yeah=***
		=aí a gente foi pra salinha aquela da churrasqueira
57	CAMILA:	*=then we moved to that small room with the barbecue place*
		pra fazê o treino .hh >aí-< tinha um <u>mo:n</u>te de cadeira
58		*to train .hh> then< there were a lo:t of chairs*
		e mesa espalhada a gente começô °>a arru↑má<° só que
59		*and tables all over and we started to °>a↑rrange them<° but*
		eu:: eu- comecei a arras↑tá as coisa >não vou<
60		*I::I- started to ↑pull the things> I won't<*
		ficá:: [levantando]=
61		*li::ft [up any]=*
		[sim]
62	LUCAS:	[yeah]
		=peso
63	CAMILA:	=weight
64		(.)
		ãrrãm
65	LUCAS:	*of course*
66		(0.8)
		>aí chegô< o diretor da escola e veio ver, aí começo
67	CAMILA:	*>then< the school principal arrived, he would*
		a assoviá assim pra ((nome omitido)) ã:::
68		*whistle to ((omitted name)) m:::.*
		dá um jeito pra gente pará de arrastá.
69		*he wanted us to stop pulling the chairs.*
70		(1.9)
		↑ah daí:: ela: estorô.
71	CAMILA:	*↑oh the::n she: flipped out.*
72		(.)

		hh
73	CAMILA:	*hh*
		com o diretor,
74	LUCAS:	*with the principal,*
75		(.)
		↑não, ela estorô com tudo assim daí ela chamô: a
76	CAMILA:	*↑no, she flipped out with everything. then she ca:lled the*
		coordenadora das atividades extras curri- extra
77		*the extra-curricular activities coordinator*
		curriculares
78		*curricular*
		mhm
79	LUCAS:	*mhm*

From lines 43 to 46, Camila is telling Lucas a problem she has been facing at the place where she trains. Even though her teacher pays an expensive rent, she is constantly reallocated to different rooms in the fitness center. In line 46, she makes a confirmation request that Lucas is following the story and Lucas responds affirmatively to it in line 47. Camila, then, tells Lucas what her main problem is: the fact that the group needs to keep changing rooms to train (lines 49-50). In line 52, Lucas offers a solution to the problem being presented: that Camila's teacher discounts this inconvenience from the amount she pays monthly. Camila agrees with him in lines 53-54, assessing his suggestion and Lucas aligns with her assessment in line 55. While Camila proceeds with the story (lines 57-61, 63, 67-73), Lucas shows attentive listening by providing continuers (lines 62, 65 and 79) and helping his partner co-construct her story (line 74).

Fishman (1983) states that men offer minimal responses such as "mhm" as a lack of interest, and De Francisco (1991) claims that these minimal responses, when uttered by men, are used as a way to detour women's topic. However, Lucas, as a man, does not detour Camila's topic. Actually, he aligns with her by offering support.

For this study, seven interactions were analyzed, and the number of transcribed lines was counted. In Fabrício and Denise's conversations there were a total of 2.674 lines. Fabrício occupied 880 lines and Denise 520. Lucas and Camila's interactions were more symmetrical. Out of 1389 lines, Lucas occupied 501 lines and Camila 467. We can say, then, that in this study, both men talked more than the women, which makes Fishman's and De Francisco's statement that women talk more than men unproved.

The fact that the pre-established analytical categories that separate men's and women's use of language defended in previous studies were not found in our analysis shows that taking gender dichotomy as a starting point to analyze data is not what researchers should do, unless gender is transparently relevant to participants. (SCHEGLOFF, 1997). The four

categories analyzed above show that the man-woman dichotomy is socially constructed rather than proved interactionally.

5 Final considerations

We showed that traditional studies on gender and language reinforced the male-female dichotomy as a research starting point. Fishman (1983), Tannen (1990) and De Francisco (1991) reinforced gender differences by claiming that men and women tend to speak differently. For them, men tend (a) not to engage in conversations as much as women; (b) see conversation as a hierarchical order in which they are superior than their counterpart; and (c) tend to produce continuers such as "mhm" in order to detour women's talk. For these authors, women (a) tend to produce more talk; (b) work harder to maintain conversations; and (c) are more engaged in interactions.

We also discussed more recent studies which disagreed with what the above mentioned authors believe in. Schegloff (1997), Weatherall (2000), Swann (2002) and Freed (2008) problematize the way researchers have been analyzing language and gender issues in conversations imposing categories which are not transparently relevant to the participants who are part of the interaction. These authors believe gender is co-constructed in context.

Our analysis of five hours of Brazilian Portuguese conversations between two heterosexual couples aligns with the view that gender cannot be taken a priori. The analytical categories based on the assertions of De Francisco (1991) that men interrupt more, produce more silence and make use of continuers, such as 'mhm', 'yeah', in order to detour their partner's talk; while women struggled more to maintain conversations by talking more, raising more topics and having far less turn-taking violations, proved incorrect.

The analysis revealed that, while one of the couples showed very symmetrical interactional practices, the woman in the other couple, compared to her husband: (a) produced many more turn violations; (b) initiated fewer topics and developed them less; (c) did not produce continuers to show affiliation; (c) spoke far less.

For further studies, more interactions between heterosexual/homosexual couples should be analyzed to verify the veracity of the male-female binary dichotomy and to contribute to the production of knowledge in this area with Brazilian Portuguese data. We also suggest that the data be collected in video for the analysis of elements that cannot be captured

in audio only, such as body language and the influence of the material world in the co-construction of the context.

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APPENDIX A – TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS TABLE

(1.8)	Pause
(.)	Micro-pause
=	Latched speech
[Text]	Overlap speech
,	Continuing intonation
↑text	Raised pitch
↓text	Lowered pitch
.	Falling intonation
?	Rising intonation
-	Abrupt cut-off
:::	Prolonging of sound
>Text<	Quicker speech
<Text>	Slowed speech
TEXT	Loud speech
°text°	Quiet speech
<u>Text</u>	A greater stress
(Text)	Transcriber doubts
xxxx	Unintelligible speech
((Text))	Transcriber's notes
hahahehehihi	Laughs