UNDERMINING THE COMMUNICATIVE ROLE OF THE EXPERT

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1. Introduction

As stated by Livingstone and Lunt (1994:93), in comparing the relations between popular and expert cultures ordinary or common-sense knowledge has long been derogated. Common knowledge has been often thought of as superficial, ignorant and full of error (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:93). However, Livingstone and Lunt (1994:94-94) report, the modernist separation of scientific rationality from everyday thinking has led to a crisis in legitimation, so expert knowledge can only be legitimated through claims to authority. This crisis stems both from the developments in scientific rationality and from ordinary understanding. In my opinion, tabloid talkshows are one genre which reflects such a crisis, since they undermine the concept of expertise and elevate lay discourse, encouraging new forms of relationships between experts and laity. In Livingstone and Lunt's words (1994:102), "audience discussion programmes adopt an anti-elitist position …. repudiating criticism of the ordinary person as incompetent or ignorant, questioning the deference traditionally due to experts… and asserting instead the worth of the common man." The cultural implications of such recasting, if proved to be true, may be that a reformulation of the concept of expert is required, at least for participatory forums. My claim is that the recasting of the expert/lay relationship manifests itself in the way the interaction proceeds.

In institutional settings participants' talk is conducted within the constraints of a specialized turn-taking system, which implies reductions and specializations of the available set of conversational options (Drew and Heritage 1992). In this paper, I am particularly interested in looking at turn-taking organisation in tabloid talkshows, since turn-taking organizations— whether for conversation or institutional contexts— are a fundamental and generic aspect of the organization of interaction. The analysis of turn-taking organisation will show that the socio-cultural identity of the expert is the result of the verbal behaviour of (Calsamiglia et al. 1995) of the participants in the interaction. Associated with the various institutional conventions are differing participation frameworks (Goffman 1981) with their associated rights and obligations, different footings and different patternings of opportunities to initiate and sanction interactional activities. I believe that the social and communicative role assigned to the expert by the tabloid talkshow juggernaut is in conflict with the external status an expert has, or should have, in the real world. The analysis will test if the norms governing the interaction impose any constraints (Levinson 1992) on the contributions by experts, and will thus help to build a discursive picture of the expert and his/her role and function in the tabloid talkshow.

2. Status

The expert is one of the four categories that take part in the tabloid talkshow. There are four category terms (Sacks 1972, Schegloff 1992) which describe the persons physically present in the interaction: host, guests, audience, expert. In turn, these four categories split into two groups: one group formed by the host as the representative of the institution, i.e., the TV network; and another group, formed by the other three categories who are invited to be part, temporarily, of the institution. In Sacks's (1972) terms, these categories would be "*not Pn adequate"*, since they would not serve to categorise any member of any population, but only members of other similar genres such as other types of talkshows.

Linked to the establishment of those categories is the question of status. Status helps to relate the on-going talk with the cultural events and institutions of the society in which the encounter occurs. The existence of two generally accepted statuses is established by Cheepen (1988:24) who claims that there is, on the one hand, a status *external* to the encounter. i.e., the social or socio-economic status in the world; and a status *internal* to the encounter, i.e., that adopted by or assigned to a speech participant in a particular encounter. Cheepen (1988:24) argues that only if the normal status is maintained can the speakers pursue their overall goal.

In the case of tabloid talkshows, and in particular with regard to the figure of the expert, the maintenance of the *normal* status is problematic, since the question that arises is what exactly does *normal* status mean for the figure of the expert? Status, as affirmed by Cheepen (1988:22ff) helps to define the type of encounter we are faced with, since the status of the speakers in the outside world is sometimes crucial to the definition of certain speech encounters. On the one hand, the fact that expert has considerable expertise on the subject under discussion certainly has social and cultural implications which should be overtly reflected in the management of the discourse, as is the case with many other programmes (cf. Calsamiglia et al. 1995). On the other, the adoption of the internal status of the tabloid talkshow implies the acceptance of a *linguistic status* which may impose certain discursive constraints on the set of communicative activities that each category can perform.

The question to be answered is, thus, whether the external status of expert, as the person called in to provide solutions, give advice, and so on, to the lay participants, is carried into the talkshow; or whether, on the contrary, it is somehow undermined by the tabloid talkshow setting. In other words, does the internal status prevail over the external status, in the case of the expert? No doubt experts are not innocent but aware that participatory forums challenge his/her role by giving credibility to ordinary experience. Livingstone and Lunt (1994:124) report that in audience discussion programmes, the expert is denied an identification with the world of expertise and science is subverted through a lack of respect and the imposition of lay discourse. However, despite being familiar with the conventions of the genre, some experts still try to impose their external status, a fact

that leads to interactional conflict. I believe that such duality should be somehow solved in the interaction, otherwise, the role of the expert is not clear. That is, is the expert– because s/he has considerable expertise in the subject– internally superior in the tabloid talkshow hierarchy give the expert a superior status over the rest or should s/he behave any other participant, without any conversational privileges?

There are three possibilities: a) the prevalence of the internal status over the external (i.e., the socio-cultural identity of the role of the expert is substituted by the internal status assigned to the expert by the tabloid talkshow. That implies accepting a linguistic role subject to the rules of the interaction); b) the prevalence of the external over the internal (the expert's socio-cultural role is maintained in the interaction with all the *linguistic allowances* that having expertise may imply, e.g. guiding the interaction); or c) the co-existence of both (in which case, it may be conflictive and confusing for the participants). One of the claims of this study is that the status patterns will clearly emerge by analysing the functioning of the turn-taking system. The results will show the way participants organise their talk and whether or not they orient themselves to the context and their internal status.

3. The figure of the expert

Calsamiglia *et al*. (1995:325ff.) analyse the relationship between socio-cultural identities and communicative strategies in one of the programmes of a top-rated talkshow by the Catalan television network, TV3. The authors claim (331) that the role of each participant is based on his/her status and on potential deviations due to the strategic behaviour of each participant in constructing his/her own identity. The authors state that (333), the communicative role of the expert is to give legitimacy to the programme and to the discourse in general. They report that the professionals take part in the discussion only when the topic is in their area of specialisation. In their analysis, the authors identify a high degree of self-selection in turn-taking which, they assume, takes place as a result of the expert's relatively independent status. The role that Calsamigilia *et al.* describe as characteristic of the expert or the professional is, however, different from the one played by such a figure in the tabloid talkshow context.

Livingstone and Lunt (1994:95ff), studied British and American talkshows belonging to the same genre analysed here, and claim that public access to and participation in the mass media represents a challenge to expertise. The mass media are going through a process of *conversationalization* (cf. Heritage et al. 1988, Fairclough 1995, Gregori 2000) that prioritises lay discourse over expert discourse. As a consequence the perception of expertise is ever more downgraded and lay discourse is elevated (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:97). The role of the expert is changing, their pedagogic role of informing and advising the laity is being supplemented by a role in which they are contrasted with ordinary people who are constructed as the real experts. The authority of the expert is replaced by "the authority of a narrative informed lived experience" (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:99).

The figure of the expert in tabloid talkshows has also been discussed in other fields apart from linguistics. Thus, Fischoff (1995), who has acted as an expert in several talkshows, explains how experts depend on the host and are turned into clowns; and adds that "even experts with the best intentions get caught in the talk show undertow, the hurried rush to judgement, and do misguided on-air counselling" (42). So, why bring an expert to a talkshow if it is not to give legitimacy to the talkshow, by supplying information (Livingstone and Lunt 1994, Hutchby 1996, Penz 1996) on the topic and providing solutions for the guests' problems? My intention is to prove that the main function of the expert in tabloid talkshows is to ratify the figure of the host and the lay people as the real experts. On the one hand, I will show how the expert is seen as complying with the host's ideas and strategies to manipulate and control the interaction. On the other, we will see how the expert is continuously challenged by an audience interested in common experience rather than on an expert perspective. This has as a consequence the undermining of the figure of the expert.

4. Analytic approach

The analysis will be based on a combination of various approaches to discourse analysis. I will follow the principles established by conversation analysis for the analysis of talk, with special emphasis on integrating the comparative dimension between institutional and conversational talk (cf. Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992; Sacks 1989/1992; Schegloff 1989). I will also draw on the concepts of interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics which emphasize the importance of context (Sperber and Wilson 1986) for the interpretation of data, i.e., in order to describe the activity I will be looking at constraints on setting, participants, acts, goals, norms etc. (cf. Hymes 1962).

The factors discussed below are concerned with the asymmetrical discourse that takes place between the expert and the other participants, specially between host and expert. Among the many linguistic strategies that have been listed as reflecting power relationships, at a more global level, I will first discuss the communicative contract (Calsamiglia *et al*. 1995) of the expert in relation to the rest of the participants and his/her place and time of participation in the interaction. At a local level, I will talk about the number and duration of turns, type of turns (self-selection or allocated) and type of turn-exchange (i.e., with or without intervention). The quality and quantity of turns will reveal the degree of participation of the expert— the amount of self-selection in combination with the type of exchange will reveal if the expert is allowed to interact freely. The presence or absence of *interventions* (cf. Gregori 1999) either by the expert or the host will reveal the power relationship between the participants. Finally the participation framework (Goffman 1981, Schiffrin 1987) established by the expert's contributions will be considered in order to explain who s/he is adressing his/her talk to and what the relation between the expert's uttterances and the rest of the participants is.

5. Analysing the figure of the expert.

Although I will refer to other talkshows, I have analysed an example of the performance of one particular expert in detail. The example is taken from one of the programmes of Maury Povich on married life.

5.1. Formal arrangements and expert's position in the talkshow sequencing.

The tabloid talkshow is highly structured to fit into the time-slot allotted to the programme. It is usually divided into seven phases or parts, with commercials separating each phase (cf. Gregori 1998). At a global level, it can be noticed that the expert often appears towards the end of the programme, or at least from phase four onwards. The number of experts ranges from 1-5 or more. For example, Donahue, in his programme *Pets on prozac* (1996), brings in four experts to discuss the topic. The options with regard to the interaction is to have them all on stage, right from the beginning; or to introduce them progressively as in the case in *Pets on prozac*. Nevertheless, the flexibility of the genre always allows for variations. As an example, in the Maury Povich show analysed here, the expert is introduced in phase 2, while on a programme of Montel the expert is introduced right at the end of phase 4 in the very last turn before the break, as illustrated in example 1:

EXAMPLE 1

H [TEXTCUT] I don't know if you would agree **Doctor,** what we'll do is we'll take a break, come back and we'll talk about all this. And again, this is—you've said in this show several times. This is when the truth sets you free. And sometimes people need to hear the truth to figure our what they need to do, correct?

E Absolutely. Yes.

H Let's take a break. We'll be back after this, and then we'll figure whether or not Keith can come out here.

The expert has been listening, but it is not until phase 2– when she is introduced and required to participate that she does so. She does not have a throat microphone, but depends on the boom microphone held by the host to make herself heard: the expert therefore takes second place, awaiting his/her cue (Livinstone and Lunt 1994:102). As for the formal arrangement, she is sitting on the first row among the studio audience, which is, according to Livingstone & Lunt (1994:102), one of the many signs of the recasting of the expert/lay relationship that is taking place in audience discussion programmes. The expert in our example is presented as Dr. X (name+surname), a *relationship expert* who has recently published a book. She has a double-hyphen surname; however, the host introduces her using only the second one (we don't know if he is unaware of her full name), at the same time that an on-screen written insert reveals her full name. It is worth pointing out that the expert does not correct the host, but allows him to continue referring to her by the wrong surname whenever he uses it.

The way the host addresses the expert seems to indicate a progressive lack of formality. First, she is introduced using her title and last name, and as befits a well known and

socially reliable group (doctors, psychiatrists, writers, etc.), in contrast with members of the audience and guests who are introduced using their first name. However, after the first time he addresses the expert, the host refers to her with a diminutive of her first name (twice); or nothing (i.e. just you as in 'what do you think?). According to Lakoff's statement (1990:93), "titles alone are the most formal of all. A last name identifies someone as a member of a group: "Mary Jones" is a particular individual, the "Mary" of all the Joneses. First names are informal and distinguish each of us as individuals" (Lakoff 1990:93). By using a diminutive of her first name, the host is downgrading the status of the expert and putting her at the same level as the guests and audience. The flexibility of the genre, however, allows many possible variations. The expert may be treated differently on different talkshows by different hosts.

5.2. Number and duration of turns

The tabloid talkshow is usually split into seven phases and the host can decide when to invite the expert to participate. In the example analysed, the expert is introduced fairly early (in the second phase). The table below displays the total number of turns by the expert and in which phase they took place.

Table 1. Number of turns by the expert

Phase	**Nº of turns**
Phase 1	0 turns
Phase 2	11 turns
Phase 3	2 turns
Phase 4	0 turns
Phase 5	3 turns
Phase 6	4 turns
Phase 7	1 turn
TOTAL	21

During the whole show the expert takes only 21 turns and the duration of the longest turns is around half a minute each– the average turn varies from 2 to 6 seconds. Elsewhere (cf. Gregori 1998) I pointed out how the number of turns taken by the expert, in comparison with the number of turns by the rest of the categories is smaller. Let us illustrate this in example 2, a 35-second turn by the expert:

EXAMPLE 2

E: It's not the youth as much as it is the fantasy versus the reality. And when they got married it came into being the fantasy clashed up against their reality. And one of the things I say in my book is that young girls today, and even older women have what I call dream girl thoughts, you know, soap opera thinking. And you take that into a marriage and you're dealing with a real person here, with real flaws. A–and one of the things I'd like to say to Owen is that Owen went into marriage of– thinking that because you lived together and you're married [it's the same thing. It's not. No.

In general, some of the expert's turns are longer than average, but the number is considerably smaller than the number of turns by the host and some guests. Furthermore, those turns are produced in different phases, and in two of them, in particular phase 1 and 4, the expert is not allowed to participate at all. In turn, a common characteristic for all the expert's contributions is high pitch and loudness, which are indicators of the effort she makes every time she takes a turn, as if fighting for space to get a word in edgeways (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:103). This also has been noticed in many other talkshows (e.g. Sally J. Raphael. 1996. *I'm fed up with my teen*).

5.3. Self-selection vs. allocated turns

As one can observe in table 2 below, there are quite a few cases of self-selection (Sacks *et al.* 1974) on the expert's part. Calsamiglia *et al* (1995:333) identifyied self-selection with authority and independent status. However, one always has to look at the nature of self-selected turns (cf. Gregori 1998, in press) before judging them as an example of free-participation. In the case of tabloid talkshows, we have to bring in non-linguistic elements in order to interpret self-selection on the part of the expert, such as the fact that the expert does not have a microphone. That is, the expert's voice cannot be heard unless the host "lends" her the microphone, a fact that, no doubt, alters the nature of self-selecting turns; since, ultimately, it is the host who has to ratify and allow for those self-selected turns.

Table 2. Self-selection vs. allocated turns

Phase	**self-selected**	**allocated**	**failed attempts to reach the floor**
Phase 2	9	3	1 (SS)
Phase 3	0	2	1 (HE)[1]
Phase 5	4	–	1 (SS)
Phase 6	1	1	0
Phase 7	–	1	0
TOTAL	14	7	0

The example of expert-talk analysed reveals an expert who is able to self-select and demand a turn instead of waiting to be allocated one. The expert's strategy for self-selection is usually achieved by means of starting to speak out loud to catch the attention of the host, who, after hearing her voice, will decide whether to grant her the microphone or not. Despite this, however, the expert's attitude shows that she does not get as many opportunities as she would like to have in the interaction: every time she speaks, it can be sensed that she has a lot more to say.

The last column in table 2 above, displays those cases in which the expert self-selects but is not allowed to have a turn because the host interrupts and/or takes the microphone away from her. Notice that there is even one case (see example 3 below), in which the host allocates the expert a turn, demanding her expertise; and, almost immediately, switches tack and interrupts her, to bring in some comments by members of

[1] Turn allocated to the expert by the host. As she starts to speak, he takes the microphone away form her.

the audience, impeding the expert to complete her turn.

EXAMPLE 3

H [TEXTCUT] maybe Gwen can help us out. [TEXTCUT] But seek in their girlfriends, and their wives all the great qualities they think of their mother.
E Yeah but Paul (haha) Pa–
H & Who said that?

5.4. Interventions in the expert's turns

If a turn is intervened by another speaker, the intervention may thwart the completion of the turn. The expert's participation should also be measured in terms of completion, i.e. whether the expert is allowed to finish her turns. Table 3 displays the number of interventions in expert's turns by another speaker.

Table 3. Interventions in expert's turns.

Butting-in interruptions	Overlaps	Simple and silent interruptions
4	3	5

In table 3 above, the results indicate that the expert has her turn intervened fairly often (almost 50% of her turns). Different types of interventions affect turn-completion differently. In overlaps, one is forced to yield the turn although one manages to complete the utterance, while in butting-in interruptions one does not even reach the floor but retires voluntarily. In simple and silent interruptions, the utterance is left incomplete due to the intervention by the incoming in speaker. Example 4 reproduces a case of a simple interruption by the host in one of the expert's turns. The host is offering the expert time to give advice, and immediately after she starts speaking, he interrupts her.

EXAMPLE 4:

H & so write– **take the time**
E [why you wanted-
H &[and work out – to write down on a piece of paper and then discuss it.

Almost all interventions in expert's turns are by the host. This seems to be a common feature of tabloid talkshows, where hosts freely intervene in experts' turns, forcing them often to yield the turn. Notice, however, that in the example of expert-talk under discussion here, the expert also intervenes in the current speaker's turn. Table 4 displays the results:

Table 4. Interventions performed by the expert:

Butting-in	Overlaps	Simple interruptions	Silent interruptions
4	3	4	1

As displayed in table 5 above, the expert also intervenes in the current speaker's turn. It is worth pointing out, however, that out of the 6 interventions by the expert only one is to the host, the rest are interventions in guests' turns (see example 5 below).

EXAMPLE 5:

G We had counselling and it– it was going well. I mean it was– very– you know good–
E & It doesn't work if a person is committed to the counselling and the other person is not =

5.5. Expert's participation framework

Schiffrin (1987) states that participation frameworks (Goffman 1981) are pragmatic because they involve speaker's relations to each other and to what is being said, meant and done. She (27) defines participation framework as the different ways in which speaker and hearer can relate to one another and to what they are saying. Hence, the participation framework (cf.. Montgomery 1999) captures both speaker/hearer relations, and speaker/utterance relations (Schiffrin 1987:27).

The question is, therefore, to whom do experts address their talk and what are the relations between expert and the other participants as a consequence of their contributions. In the example analysed, it is first noticeable that the discourse of the expert is different from the other participants' discourse: while lay people almost always personalise, most of her discourse are abstractions (Livingstone and Lunt 1994), as can be observed in example 6 below:

EXAMPLE 6:

E [XXX] To remember that you can't change anyone but yourself And what you do when you want the person to become what you want them to become. You'll become the person that you want the other person to be. That's the way you do that. Rather than always harping on his bad behaviour, you become the person that you want him to be, and then you become the person you want her to be. [XXX] You can't be anybody's parent!

In this particular contribution, the expert tried to "pursue analogies, identify complexities and moral dificulties […] locate arguments in their historical or cultural contexts (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:98) that did not necessarily match the direction in which the discourse might be going at that particular moment." This is common since "often, the expert takes advantage of her turn to give advice, to reach conclusions and to classify the participants as belonging to a certain group; and her discourse is related to abstract problems that might be applied to the participants, but not necessarily" (98). This feature is illustrated in example 7 below:

EXAMPLE 7:

E [No no he–he became] what I call in my book the best kind of loving. He became **the candy man.**
E [that– that was– hold–that– Shannon for him was his backup woman. OK. [A lot of men have **back up women.**
E Paul has a syndrome that I wrote about in my book, it's called **married with a single flare**

This kind of sterotyping discourse ensues from the fact, among others, that experts

are not given enough time to analyse each of the participants in detail (cf. Fishoff 1995). In order to avoid personalising, their strategy is to draw general meaningful conclusions when they are given the chance to occupy the floor. At the same time, as is the case of the expert in Povich's programme, some experts use the talkshow as a way of promoting themselves (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:114) talking about their work and expertise field, which they use as a tool that legitimises their discourse. The expert in Povich's programme repeats "my book" four times and uses technical terms coined by her in her book, in order to refer to common experiences (e.g. *dream girl thoughts, candy man, married with a single flare,* etc.).

The response of the lay people towards the discourse of the expert is not always positive. Livingstone and Lunt (1994) claim that in these type of programmes the expert is "not always allowed to retain their expert status but rather [the expert is] pushed towards the personal." In our example, Povich tries to take the expert away from generalisations by asking her questions about the participants, as illustrated in example 8 below.

EXAMPLE 8:

H You know who we have here. We have Dr. X who 's going to help us through all of this. Because she's been listening to all the stories. Now, X. just this couple we're talking to right now, they seem [X–m] a little too young to get married [X- m].

Additionally, contributions by the expert may be challenged by the lay participants, who will intervene in the expert's discourse if they don't agree. One way of undermining expertise is, for example, by openly accusing experts of not knowing enough about them in order to reach conclusions. Example 9 below reproduces the way a guest addresses the expert in one of the Montel Williams' programme on marital rape.

EXAMPLE 9:

G you've only known me for five minutes. You can't say that about me.

The host also undermines the status of the expert by clearly limiting not only the number of turns and time allowed to expert contributions, but by clearly guiding topic progression through questions and control of the turn-taking system, as displayed in example 3 above. In this example, the host asks the expert a question demanding her expert opinion on the wife and mother dychotomy. This is a problem which affects two of the three couples present, since their marriage is not going well because the husband treats his wife as a mother rather than a wife. Contrary to expectations, we do not hear the expert's opinion because the host hears a voice at the back and interrupts the expert walking away from her in order to bring in the contribution of the audience-member. This is an example of a common denominator for most talkshows. Thus, although the expert is conceded certain authority, the linguistic strategies used by the participants show that tabloid talkshows are more concerned about the genuineness of the accounts given by lay participants than they are about the value and manner of expert contributions. Livingstone & Lunt (1994:123) state that in audience discussion programmes personal and everyday experiences are valued more than expert's abstractions. Thus, prioritazing the ordinary over

the expert (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:106).

6. Conclusions

In this paper I have attempted to analyse the communicative role of the expert in a particular type of activity (Levinson 1992), the American tabloid talkshow, in order to provide a discursive picture of the expert in such activity. I looked at turn-taking features and analysed the participation framework established by the expert's contributions in order to find out the possible constraints on the personnel and the role, as well as on the functional adequacy of contributions by the expert. By measuring the number and duration of turns, the results display the expert as the category with the lowest degree of participation.

Calsamiglia et al. (333) claim that self-selection arises from the legitimacy or authority that each participant assumes throught the programme depending on the comunicative contract and other factors. I concluded that self-selected turns by the expert are only apparent; since it is ultimately the host who decides whether to grant the expert the turn or not. On the other hand, the nature of interventions confirms that participants are oriented to particular patterns of conduct, so that they use interventions in such a way as to make their verbal behaviour coherent with the status they have been assigned at the beginning of the programme (Gregori 1999). Hence, the expert intervenes often in the guest's turns but refrains from intervening in the host's turns, while the host often intervenes in the expert's turn. This clearly ratifies the host's identity as the institutional representative whose contract allows him to intervene at will in the ongoing talk. The expert also legitimates and ratifies the action of the host by acting in compliance with the total control of turn-taking and topic progression, by accepting a limited time to make contributions, by trying to be brief and concise, by allowing for interventions on the part of the host and by self-selecting only if the host allows him/her to do so. In doing so, the expert is accepting the rules established for the interaction.

Notwithstanding his/her apparent compliance, the presence of interventions and self-selection on the part of the expert– features often observed as traits characteristic of dominant or superior participants in asymmetrical interactions– reveal the conflict between internal and external status that the expert goes through when taking part in the tabloid talkshow. The expert uses such linguistic strategies to save face in front of blunt attacks to his/her social condition as the person in possession of the expertise. Such features are the indicators of the lack of fulfilment of the expert's discursive needs. The analysis of the participation framework also confirmed the conflict existing between the expert's internal and external status. It was observed that expert talk was more abstract than personal; and that the expert took advantage of her turns to ratify her external status by self-promoting her job with contributions that, although topic related, did not necessarily fit in with what was going on at the moment. The reaction to such discourse from the other categories was frequently a challenge to the expert's contribution— e.g. by interrupting and not allowing the expert to complete his/her turn.

On the whole, it seems that the discursive structure of the tabloid talkshow undermines the role of the expert and of expertise, that they prioritise the lay over the expert, while the host and the lay participants become the real experts. As argued by Livingstone and Lunt (1994:97), since the tabloid talkshow is a programme for ordinary people who can communicate in an ordinary way to an ordinary audience better than the expert, the discourse changes: expertise is undermined and lay discourse is elevated.

A satisfactory account of expert-talk and the way expertise is dealt with in the tabloid talkshow can only be given if we accept the concept of *emergent status*. In the tabloid talkshow, and in particular in the case of the expert, the two statuses, internal and external co-exist. That is, the status of the expert is not pre-established but is continuously reassessed as the interaction progresses. The status becomes a dynamic element in the hands of the host who will weave between the internal and external status of the expert according to the *emergent* discursive *goals* (Tracy and Coupland 1990) which arise as the discourse unfolds, and which appear to be in conflict with the maintenance of a unique status for the expert. Consequently, in the tabloid talkshow there is a capricious reassessment of the concept of expertise, which is continuously downgraded and upgraded at the convenience of hosts and guests. The consequences are the denial and undermining of expertise through a lack of respect and the imposition of certain interactional rules which permit the identification of the expert with the lay. In sum, the tabloid talkshow genre suggests new forms of relationships between the expert and the laity (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:131) which seems to favour the "loss of expertise through discussion with the general public" (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:116). One way of showing that such loss of expertise is taking place is through the analysis of the turn-taking system in relation to goal and status.

7. Appendix: Transcription conventions

SS	self-selection
=	when lack of space prevents continuous speech from A from being presented on a single line of text, then '=' at the end of the box and '=' at the beginning of the other shows that it is the same turn
italics	used to indicate and explain non-verbal features, reactions, extralinguistic information in the transcript.
bold type	is used in the examples to highlight the feature being discussed
(XXX)	unintelligible segment.
[	overlap. A bracket connecting the talk of different speakers shows that overlapping talk begins at that point.
]	overlap finishes at this point.
wor(h)d	embedded laughter.
hh	indicates an audible out-breath and in-breath.
(( ))	used to specify "some phenomenon that the transcriber does not want to wrestle with."

— Cut-off speech. Voluntarily: hanging discourse, speaker interrupts his/her own discourse, in order to produce a repair, paraphrase and leaves it grammatically incomplete.
Or involuntarily when interrupted, placed at the end of an incomplete utterance.

& Single interruption: exchange of turns; simultaneous speech; 1st speaker turn incomplete.

***** butting-in interruption (no exchange of turns).

• silent interruption (exchange of turns; no simultaneous speech; 1st speaker turn incomplete).

. sentence final falling intonation

, clause-final intonation ("more to come").

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