Extreme case formulations in Spanish pre-electoral debates and English panel interviews

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ABSTRACT   This article is concerned with Extreme Case Formulations
(ECFs) (Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz, 1986) in multiple-party TV programmes
in two different languages: Spanish and English. I examine the role of ECFs
in Spanish pre-electoral debates and in English panel interviews. English
data is 77 minutes and 58 seconds long and comprises nine different panel
interviews of political, socio-political and social issues and Spanish data is
78 minutes long and includes four political pre-electoral debates. The results
will disclose that the number of ECFs found in the Spanish and in the English
corpora differs considerably (48 versus 81). And in relation to the type of
recording, the data will reveal that a) interviewers and interviewees deployed
many more ECFs in political recordings (2.8 percent) than in socio-political
(1.2 percent) or social recordings (1.3 percent); and b) politicians used more
ECFs (4.8 percent) than any other type of interviewees (1.5 percent).

KEY WORDS: *discursive psychology, extreme case formulation, hyperbole, panel
interviews, persuasion, pre-electoral debate*

Introduction

This article is concerned with Extreme Case Formulations (ECFs) (Edwards, 2000;
Pomerantz, 1986) in multiple-party TV programmes in two different languages:
Spanish and English. We are going to examine the role of ECFs in Spanish
pre-electoral debates and in English panel interviews. We examine data from
155 minutes and 58 seconds of TV programmes in both Spanish and English.
English data is 77 minutes and 58 seconds long and comprises nine different
panel interviews of political, socio-political and social issues and Spanish data
is 78 minutes long and includes four political pre-electoral debates.

    Any full account of ECFs must have an interactive dimension and it is for
this reason that we include information about ECFs studies carried out in the

field of what is known as Discursive Psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992). As Edwards (2004) explains:

> Discursive psychology studies the relationship between mind and world, as psychology generally does, but as a discourse topic, that is, as a participants' concern, a matter of talk's business, talk's categories, talk's rhetoric, and talk's current interactional concerns. **[AQ]**

First of all we are going to offer some frameworks for the study of ECFs. These include information about 1) Discursive Psychology and ECFs, 2) ECFs and hyperbole, and 3) ECFs and persuasion. Then, we will carry out an analysis which includes a full account of the lexico-grammatical repertoire and discourse processes found in the data. And finally, we will discuss the results.

Frameworks for the study of ECFs

DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND ECFS

Discursive Psychology (DP) is a new approach which analyses discourse as a situated, action-oriented and constructed activity (Edwards and Potter, 1992). It is situated because '… talk and texts are embedded in sequences of interaction, and in various kinds of mundane and institutional activity' and because '… DP considers discourse pervasively rhetorical' (Edwards and Potter, 2001: 13). One important idea is that talk is oriented to but not determined by its sequential position and setting. The analyst should not adopt a stance based on predictions; discourse is an ongoing activity constructing and making relevant the participants' emotional feelings and attitude. Attitudes, in turn, are examined as evaluative practices done in discourse. And it is rhetorical because when people offer an evaluation they are normally reacting against somebody else's evaluation. So, discourse is not so much shaped by somebody's thoughts as by the development of a rhetorical argumentation (Billig, 1991; Edwards and Potter, 2001; Pomerantz, 1986). In this way, DP regards discourse as both constructed and constructive because it studies the way discourse itself is constructed and the way discourse constructs versions of the world. Edwards and Potter (2001: 14–15) explain that 'Words, metaphors, idioms, rhetorical devices, descriptions, accounts, stories, and so on, are drawn on, and built, in the course of interaction and in the performance of particular actions' and '… [DP] studies how versions of inner life, of local circumstances, of history and broader social groups and structures are produced to do particular things in interaction.'

One important strand of investigation in DP is related to the way an individual's evaluations and descriptions mirror his/her own stance. One example is the use of what Pomerantz calls (1986) 'extreme case formulations' (ECFs). Edwards (2000: 347–8) explains that ECFs are '… descriptions or assessments that deploy extreme expressions such as every, all, none, best, least, as good as it gets, always, perfectly, brand new, and absolutely'. Pomerantz (1986: 227) summarizes the three main uses of ECFs in the following way:

1. to assert the strongest case in anticipation of non-sympathetic hearings,
2. to propose the cause of a phenomenon,
3. to speak for the rightness (wrongness) of a practice.

It is really interesting to note that these ECFs are very weak in the sense that it is extremely easy to refute them. If somebody mentions just one counter-example, the validity of the ECFs is in jeopardy. For this reason, it is very common to find a softer version ('a softener') right after an ECF has been challenged (Pomerantz, 1986). The order is: ECF–challenge–softener. Here is an example (Edwards, 2000: 355):

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1    W:      But u::m, (0.3) and I always used to fi:nd that (0.2) um
2            he'd never ever listen to (.) how I ↑ fe:lt.
3            (0.5)
4            O:r he'd he'd think I was being silly:. (0.5) about my
5            fee:lings..h If I tried to descri:be something (.) to him
6            about how I felt about him,.h he'd lau:gh and say.h
7            youknow these ↑thi:ngs.
8            (0.2)
9            And it would frustrate me so much I'd g- end up getting
10           so a:ngry:, (0.4) that (0.6) youknow I'd think wh:at is
11           the poi:nt.
12           (2.6)
13    H: I didn't laugh at everything.
14           (0.5)
15    W:      °Yehh. (.) But most things though.°
16           (.)
17    H:      Huhhh. ((jocular exasperation))
18    W:      Huhh. ((similar tone))
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In this conversation the wife (W) uses two ECFs (lines 1 and 2): 'always' and 'never' and both are challenged with 'everything' (line 13). Finally, the wife is 'forced' to utter a softener version and says 'most things' (line 15).

Despite the 'weakness' of these ECFs it is interesting to note that Edwards (2000) has discovered that the use of these ECFs is very popular and wide-spread. The reason is that most of the times people accept them and orient to their non-literal interpretations.

ECFs AND HYPERBOLE

According to Norrick (2004), although ECFs are a sub-category of hyperbole, they are essentially different from non-extreme hyperboles in a number of ways:

1. ECF matches the typical apodictic[1] tone of proverbs, while hyperbolic imagery fits the colourful character of proverbial phrases and idioms.
2. While both ECF and non-extreme hyperbole are heard as defeasible and non-literal, and can occur adjacent to one another in everyday talk, ECFs generally embed extreme expressions in otherwise literal-seeming talk, while hyperbole often takes the form of imagery and is surrounded by obviously non-literal talk.

3. ECF and hyperbole are comprehended differently: ECFs violate the truthful-
    ness maxim, while non-extreme hyperboles violate only the quantity maxim
    or are heard as approximations to the speaker's beliefs.

If we compare hyperbolic utterances such as 'the line's a mile long' with
ECFs such as 'this line has no end at all' or 'this line will never end' we can con-
clude that whereas the first violates the quantity maxim but not the quality
maxim, the second does violate the quality maxim (Gibbs, 1994; Norrick,
2004). According to Grice (1975: 46), under the category of quality falls a
supermaxim ('Try to make your contribution one that is true') and two more
specific maxims:

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Gibbs (1994) explains that the difference lies in the speaker's intentions.
When somebody utters a non-extreme hyperbole such as 'The line's a mile long'
the listener knows that it is not the speaker's intention to say something which is
false but rather to say something which varies in length (i.e. there is an approx-
imation), that is, in quantity. On the other hand, when somebody says 'The
line has no end at all', s/he is saying something which is false. In fact, ECFs and
hyperboles receive different responses in following talk. Norrick (2004: 1737)
explains that:

> Any participant in a conversation, including the one who produces an ECF,
> may contradict it with impunity in immediately following talk. The speaker
> who produces a non-extreme hyperbole may scale it down, if other participants
> question its validity.

HYPERBOLE AND PERSUASION

According to Roiz (1993) persuasive strategies are oriented to: 1) diminish
the listeners' psychological resistance; 2) verify the correct transmission of the
message; and 3) attract listeners' attention. So, it is necessary to know well the
person we want to persuade in order to use these procedures adequately. Roiz
(1993) also suggests six persuasive rules:

1. exploitation of the feelings;
2. simplification;
3. exaggeration and distortion of information;
4. repetition of topics and ideas in an orchestral way;
5. exploitation of the psychological contagion;
6. support of pre-existing attitudes.

Roiz (1993) states that exaggeration of the information is a widely recognized
strategy among persuaders. This author (Roiz, 1993: 59) offers a table[2] which
summarizes the main types of procedures used (Table 1).

Similarly, when Cockcroft and Cockcroft (1992) describe the schematic
language used when persuading, they include 'Amplification and Diminution'
(auxesis and meiosis[3]) and explain that 'Amplification and diminution can be

TABLE 1.   *Procedures*

Principle or rule	Main procedures	Type of procedure
Exaggeration and distortion of information	The conviction is produced when appealing to the power of the referential facts which have been previously distorted	Psychological
	– Biased treatment of the reality – The description of the facts is accompanied by categorical opinions which distort them	Argumentative
	– The original menaing is distorted and substituted by a favourable menaing to the speaker's persuasive capacity – All or some of the details of the event are exaggerated in a way that favours the success of the persuasion – Judgements about the facts are distorted and convergent and contrasted codes are sometimes used (serious, humoristic, burlesque, cynical)	Linguistic and semiological

used both to develop an argument in detail, and to shorten it; to enhance the importance of the subject, and to denigrate it. Either can produce powerful persuasive effects, often involving the use of trope' (Cockcroft and Cockcroft, 1992: 132). And the first device they examine is the hyperbole.

Corpus analysis

The analysis of this corpus is divided into two big sections: 'Spanish pre-electoral debates' and 'English panel interviews'. Each section is subdivided into three parts: 'Lexico-grammatical repertoire', 'Discourse processes' and 'Sequential organization in conversation'. The reason why I have decided to analyse my corpus using these three criteria is because the semantic, the syntactic and the conversational levels go hand-in-hand in real-life language. For example, if a speaker A needs something which a hearer B has, s/he may say either: 'Could I borrow this?' or 'I need this'. Semantically speaking, both utterances have the same illocutionary force: a request, but the level of indirectness and the syntax are different. Language is a matter of choice and behind each choice there are conversational and contextual explanations which justify each option. For this reason, in order to offer a detailed analysis of any corpus taken from real life it is necessary to take into account all these three levels.

SPANISH PRE-ELECTORAL DEBATES

The Spanish corpus selected for analysis is made up of four recordings of four pre-electoral debates broadcasted by Canal Sur Televisión. In this type of debate each interviewee has a pre-established and limited time to talk and turn-to-turn discussion among interviewees is not allowed. The interviewer is simply a moderator who allocates turns among interviewees and acts as arbitrator when this turn allocation system is in jeopardy.

The length of these recordings is 78 minutes (19 minutes and 30 seconds each). There are four interviewees and one interviewer in all of them. The interviewees are politicians who represent different political parties in the Andalusian Regional Elections (14 March 2004). The details of each of these recordings is:

- First recording:
  Date: 5 February 2004
  Interviewees: Mr Caballos (PSOE); Mr Sanz (PP); Mr Calvo (PA); Mr Romero (IU)
- Second recording:
  Date: 19 February 2004
  Interviewees: Ms Álvarez (PSOE); Mr Fuentes (PP); Mr Benavides (PA); Ms Caballero (IU)
- Third recording:
  Date: 26 February 2004
  Interviewees: Mr Soler (PSOE); Mr Ramos (PP); Mr Del Olmo (PA); Mr Vaquero (IU)
- Fourth recording:
  Date: 4 March 2004
  Interviewees: Mr Chaves (PSOE); Ms Martínez (PP); Mr Ortega (PA); Mr Valderas (IU)

Lexico-grammatical repertoire

The total number of ECFs found in this corpus is 48. After having analysed all of them I arrived at the conclusion that they could be classified in five categories. The criteria used for this classification is twofold: syntactic and semantic. In this way, we find the following categories: totality, exclusiveness or zero, extreme adjectives or adverbs and superlatives, numbers, intensifiers.

Totality   These EFCs express the total number or the amount of something or they describe something which happens all the time. They are 'todos/o/as' ('all') and 'siempre' ('always'). The first one was the most numerous of all ECFs. We found 15 examples of 'todos/o/as' ('all') and only one of 'siempre' ('always'). Here is one example of each:

First recording: 5 February 2004:

             You not should be unaware that in all the surveys of
Mr Caballos: US<u>TED</u> no debe desconocer (0.5) que en **todas** las EN<u>CUESTAS</u> de

opinion the Andalusians are satisfied and
opinión (0.8) los andaluces (0.3) están <SATIS<u>FECHOS</u>> (0.5) y

(they) approve clearly the services that (they) receive in education
aprueban (0.4) con creces los servicios que reciben en educación (0.5)

in public health in care health the pensions the
en sanidad (0.4) en atención sanitaria (0.4) las pensiones (0.3) las

roads the culture the tourism all is in the
carreteras (0.3) la cultura (0.2) el turismo (0.2) **todo** está en las

surveys
encuestas.

Fourth recording: 4 March 2004.

Ms Martínez:	because besides in these nearly fourteen years of presidency (you) should porque además en estos casi.hh catorce años de presidente se tenían have got used to be more polite que haber acostumbrado a ser más respetuoso=

          always so (I) have been

Mr Cháves: =<u>**SIEM**</u>**PRE** lo he [sido]

          yes not

Ms Martínez: [ya] no

getting nervous
ponerse nervioso=

always so (I) have been and above all with you Ms. Martínez
Mr Cháves: =**siempre** lo he sido [y sobre todo con usted señora Martíne]

          look I'm you going to tell then
Ms Martínez: [mire yo le voy a decir   ] pues

let me speak.
déjeme hablar.

It is interesting to observe that the second extract is one of those special cases of turn-to-turn-talk with interruptions and overlaps. It is equally notable that the overlap is produced when the Mr Cháves says 'siempre' ('always'). Ms Martínez ignores this 'siempre', which contradicts her previous utterance, and continues. Instead of rectifying, Mr Cháves insists and repeats the ECF 'siempre'. Edwards (2000) explains that when an ECF is challenged it is normally followed by a softener. In this example, although 'siempre' is not explicitly challenged there is a direct attack and the ECF is not recognized as a reasonable defence. In cases like this the opposite happens: the ECF is repeated. Indeed, for Ms Martínez to pursue and challenge Mr Cháves's ECF would have spoiled the main trajectory of her talk, which was to open up some space for her to say, without interruption, whatever she wanted to say next.

Exclusiveness and zero In this category we include examples of absolute nega-tion or instances of ECFs which describe qualities limited to a particular person or group. We found the following formulations: 'no hay quien' (there is nobody who), 'ni una sóla' ('not even one'), 'nunca' ('never'), 'ningún/a' ('no one'), 'nada' ('nothing'), 'solo' ('only'), 'único' ('single'), 'exclusivamente' ('exclusively'). Only

one example of each was found except for 'nunca' and 'ningún/a' (two examples of each) and 'solo/a' (three examples):

Fourth recording: 4 March 2004.

Andalusia is growing in employment since ago ten years
Mr Cháves: Andalucía está creciendo en empleo desde hace diez años

    without a break   ten years since the year 1994
ininterrumpidamente (0.3) <u>diez</u> <u>años</u> (0.3) desde el año 1994

    ruling   Felipe González ten years and you
gobernando (0.3) Felipe González diez años (0.7) y USTEDES

    never it have acknowledged Ms. Martínez never it have
<u>NUNCA</u> lo han reconocido (1) señora Martínez **<u>NUNCA</u>** lo han

acknowledged
reconocido.

*F*ourth recording: 4 March 2004.

one throws the ball to the other   but the fact (I) think that is that if
Mr Valderas: uno le tira la pelota al otro (0.7) pero la realidad yo creo que es que si::

    not are in a position to see Andalucía from a
(0.4) no ( ) estáis en una posición de ver Andalucía <desde::> una

perspective exclusively virtual or of art paper
perspectiva **exclusivamente** virtual o de papel cuché.

Extreme adjectives or adverbs and superlatives This category is made up of adjectives which express the greatest degree of a particular quality and adverbs which denote the highest frequency of an event. In this group we have found: one 'permanentemente' ('permanently'), one 'vital' ('vital'), one 'imposible' ('impossible'), one 'importantísima' ('most important'), one 'mejor' ('best'), three 'peor' ('worst'), three 'más' ('most').

First recording: 5 February 2004:

that Teófila Martínez is the leader political **worst**
Mr Caballos: que Teófila Martínez (0.7) es (0.3) la LÍDER política peor

valued of the four who are running
valorada (0.2) de los cuatro que se presentan.

Third recording: 26 February 2004:

We are going to have the same situation present of frustration
Mr Del Olmo: vamos a tener (0.3) la <u>MIS</u>MA situación actual de FRUSTRACIÓN

In numerous strata of the society which see that it's a
en numerosas capas de la sociedad (0.3) que ven que es una

    necessity imposible to meet with wages in
<<u>NECESIDAD</u>> (0.5) **imposible** de cubrir con unos sueldos (0.3) en
which if they get a mortgage (they) are not left even 100
los que <u>si</u> entran en una <hipoteca> (0.5) no les queda ni siquiera 100

euros to finish the month
euros para terminar el mes.

Numbers Only one number was found 'mil veces' ('a thousand times'). Even though 'a thousand times' is not mathematically (and so semantically) an ECF, it is used as such in actual talk. It is very interesting to note that this ECF is preceded and followed by two ECF: 'todos' ('all') and 'siempre' ('always').

First recording: 5 February 2004:

	insists the Mr. Spokesman of the PP his speech of all these
Mr Caballos:	insiste:: el <señor portavoz del:: PP hh su discurso de todos estos

years in the Parliament what do you mean (you) have not said it in Parliament
años en el Parlamento cómo que no lo ha dicho en el Parlamento?

(you) it have said a thousand times you always say the same that Andalusia is
(0.6) lo ha dicho **mil veces** SIEMPRE dice lo mismo que Andalucía es

a disaster
un desastre.

Intensifiers There is one example of intensifier: 'absolutamente nada' ('absolutely nothing'). In this case an extreme adverb precedes an ECF:

First recording: 5 February 2004:

	Yes let's see if me me respect some time because (you) don't don't respect
Mr Sanz:	Sí a ver si me me respeta alguna vez porque no:: no respeta

absolutely nothing and because I know that you hurt these things because
absolutamente nada y es que yo <u>se</u> que le duelen estas cosas porque

that (it) is allowed to say these things in Andalusia when they
que se puedan decir estas cosas (0.3) en Andalucía cuando ellos

permanently do that in the parliament (it) is not allowed
permanentemente (0.4) hacen que en el parlamento <u>no</u> se puedan

to say
decir.

This intensified ECF is also followed by another ECF 'permanentemente' ('permanently').

Discourse processes

ECFs may not be used in isolation but followed by a challenge or by another ECF. We have already seen some examples where multiple ECFs are used by the same speaker and in the same turn. What it is really interesting is the repetition of the same ECF in the same turn. We found five examples of repetition in our corpus: 1) 'siempre lo he sido – siempre lo he sido' ('I've always been – I've always been'); 2) 'ningún – ninguna' ('none – none'); 3) 'X tiene la culpa de todo – Y tiene la culpa de todo – Z tiene la culpa de todo' ('X gets the blame for everything' – 'Y gets the blame for everything' – 'Z gets the blame for everything'); 4) 'toda España – toda España' ('all Spain – all Spain'); 5) 'ustedes nunca lo han reconocido – ustedes nunca lo han reconocido' ('you have never acknowledged it – you have never acknowledged it'). Three of them (the second, the fourth and the fifth)

were produced by the same speaker and in the same turn. One possible reason for these repetitions is that they provide:

> ... a relief from the demands of face-to-face interaction: the speaker is provided with an opportunity to plan what he or she will say next while the listener's processing demands are diminished with the redundancy that accompanies repetition. (Ehrlich, 1994: 87)

In contrast to this, the first and the third examples were uttered in conflicting turn takings. The first one is produced when Mr Cháves is interrupted by Ms Martínez and that is the reason why he repeats the ECFs. The third is produced in the following context:

Second recording: 19 February 2004:

Ms Álvarez:	I knew that at the end (I) would get the blame for
Mr Fuentes:	señora Álvarez (0.6) yo sabía que al final iba a tener **la culpa de**
	everything
	todo=
	you not
Ms Álvarez:	=usted no=
	because lately the party popular gets the blame for everything and
Mr Fuentes:	=porque última<u>mente</u> el partido popular (0.4) tiene **la culpa de todo** y
	(we) go on getting the blame
	seguimos teniendo la culpa=
Ms Álvarez:	=[hh]
	it (I) say because (we) are going to get the blame for everything
Mr Fuentes:	[lo] digo porque es que vamos a tener **la culpa de todo**=
	no
Ms Álvarez:	=no::=
	the chart on the table
Mr Fuentes:	=el gráfico de la mesa (...)

The ECF is challenged by two negations 'usted no' ('you not') and 'no' but instead of being followed by a softener (Edwards, 2000), the ECF is repeated. This defiant behaviour is repeated in a much more explicit example of ECF + challenge + softener:

Second recording: 19 February 2004:

	And I'm not going to say that (I) don't permit you it because I permit you
Mr Fuentes:	y <u>no</u> le voy a decir que no se lo permito (0.5) porque yo a <u>usted</u> **se lo**
	everything
	permito <u>todo</u>=
	not everything
Ms Álvarez:	=**no todo no**=
	after seven years sharing with you the Parliament
Mr Fuentes:	=después de siete AÑOS (0.6) compartiendo con usted el Parlamento
	now for a debate more or less (I)'m not going to quarrel with you
	ya por un debate más o menos no me voy a pelear con usted=

> of course
Ms Álvarez: =claro.

In this extract the ECF 'todo' ('everything') is followed by an explicit challenge 'no todo no' ('not everything not'). But instead of softening it, Mr Fuentes goes on with his defiant speech and Ms Álvarez decides to finish with an ironic 'claro' ('of course') which is far from being an agreement.

Additionally, we can also observe a close relationship between repetition and floor management in this last extract. When Mr Fuentes says 'se lo permito todo' ('I permit you everything') Ms Álvarez repeats the ECF 'todo' ('everything') in order to take the floor. As Bamford (2000: 101) has already noted:

> Interactants use repetition as a floor-seeking and floor-retaining tactic. In highly overlapped conversations, where there is competition for the floor, repetition is often used both to wrest the floor from another speaker and to keep it.

Tannen (1989) has also included in her list of functions of repetition in interaction 'getting or keeping the floor' (Tannen, 1989: 51). In this list she also includes uses such as: showing listenership, providing backchannel response, stalling, gearing up to answer or speak, humour and play, savouring and showing appreciation of a good line or a good joke, persuasion, linking one speaker's ideas to another's, ratifying another's contributions (including another's ratification), and including in an interaction a person who did not hear a previous utterance. In a footnote, Tannen (1989) acknowledges that there are also negative functions of repetitions and among these we can find: to challenge, question, mock, ridicule, and trivialize.

Sequential organization in conversation

In relation to the sequential organization of ECFs in Spanish, the following distribution was found:

> Two different examples of ECFs were found in two concluding remarks of turns. From a rhetorical point of view, the conclusion of a speech plays a very important role. The speaker knows that the hearer will normally remember the very last words of his/her speech and not the whole talk and for this reason s/he should be as concise as possible but, at the same time, as informative as possible. So, ECFs are used to help the speaker express his/her stance in a succinct and revealing way. In the following example Mr Ortega concludes his turn saying that Andalusia does not develop properly because they are constantly quarrelling:

Fourth recording: 4 March 2004:

> and here only we agree in quarrelling and that is what
Mr Ortega: (...) y aquí **sólo** nos ponemos de acuerdo en pelearnos y eso es lo que

> Makes that Andalucía does not develop at a pace steady
> hace que Andalucía no se desarrolle a un ritmo adecuado.

Seven ECFs are related to the turn-taking system: some speakers are interrupted when they are uttering an ECF. This proves the stirring effect of ECFs: they are so emotion-charged that they make people react in favour of/against them. In the following extract Mr Caballos (PSOE party) is saying that Ms Martínez

(PP party) is the worst valued leader of all the candidates and then he is interrupted by Mr Sanz (PP party). After that interruption Mr Caballos repeats what he said right before and goes on talking.

First recording: 5 February 2004:

that Teófila Martínez is the leader political worst
Mr Caballos: (...) que Teófila Martínez (0.7) es (0.3) la LÍDER política **peor**

valued of the four that compete
valorada (0.2) de los cuatro que se presen [tan]

that you are inventing
Mr Sanz: (...)   [eso] se lo está inventando

[usted]

is the worst valued
Mr Caballos: [es la   ] **peor** valorada (...)

Five different examples of ECFs were found right before and/or after a big pause which is not in a transition-relevance-place. These pauses are longer than 0.5 seconds. Again, this is a rhetorical device used in order to highlight the ECF. In the following example Mr Ortega is explaining the reasons why North American businessmen did not invest in Algeciras port:

Fourth recording: 4 March 2004:

they took an helicopter flied over the Port and left
Mr Ortega: (...) cogieron un helicóptero (0.3) sobrevolaron el Puerto y se fueron

without investing for one single reason because they realised
sin invertir (0.7) por una **sola** razón (0.7) porque se dieron cuenta (...)

One ECF was found in a rhetorical question and another one in an answer to a rhetorical question. So we can say that ECFs are associated to rhetorical talk. The reason is crystal clear: a rhetorical question is answered by the same person who posed it or is just not intended to be answered at all so it will not be refuted. For this reason, the speaker can allow him/herself to be as extremist as s/he pleases. In the following extract, Mr Sanz (PP party) is explaining the reasons why Ms Martínez (PP party) is not the worst valued leader of all the candidates:

First recording: 5 February 2004:

Look I do not understand you Mr Caballos How can be the worst
Mr Sanz: Mire yo no le entiendo Sr. Caballos (0.4) ¿Cómo puede ser la **peor**

valued Teófila Martínez and is the mayoress most voted in Spain?
valorada Teófila Martínez y es la alcaldesa más votada de España?

you have tried
(1.1) Ustedes han intentado (...)

Another ECF was uttered when a politician was summarizing what another politician had just said. In this case, the rhetorical benefit of this strategy is to intensify what someone else has just said. In this way, a speaker can exploit to his own advantage what another one has said because s/he will offer his/her

own interpretation. Previous to the following extract Mr Sanz (PP party) had just said that Andalusia is not progressing. Mr Caballos (PSOE party, the political party of the regional government) answers in the following way:

First recording: 5 February 2004:

<blockquote>

That is that here will be very bad everything done but Andalusia

Mr Caballos: O sea (0.3) que aquí estará muy mal **todo** hecho pero Andalucía (0.6)
is working
está (0.8) funcionando (…)

</blockquote>

Finally, an ECF is deployed in a complaint. Mr Sanz is complaining because Mr Caballos is interrupting him constantly. In order to intensify this complaint Mr Sanz uses this ECF:

First recording: 5 February 2004:

<blockquote>

Yes let's see if you respect me once because no no respect

Sr Sanz: Sí a ver si me me respeta alguna vez porque no:: no respeta
absolutely nothing and the thing is
absolutamente nada y es que (…)

</blockquote>

ENGLISH PANEL INTERVIEWS

The English corpus selected for analysis is made up of nine recordings of nine panel interviews broadcast by the BBC. They all come from the well-known programme *Newsnight*. In this type of interview each interviewee does not have a pre-established time to talk and turn-to-turn discussion among interviewees is allowed. The interviewer is very active because s/he constantly asks questions to keep the panel alive and interesting.

The length of these recordings is 77 minutes and 58 seconds. There are three interviewees in four of them and only two in the rest. The interviewees range from politicians to professors and journalists. In fact, we can divide these recordings in three groups: 1) The political panels where all the participants are politicians; 2) the socio-political panels where interviewees are not only politicians but also people like professors, journalists, executives, writers, etc.; and 3) the social panels where there are no politicians and the issues dealt with are related to social topics. The details of each of these recordings are:

- First recording:
  Name of the panel: 'Hutton Inquiry'
  Type of panel: political
  Date: 26 September 2003
  Duration: 9 minutes and 6 seconds
  Interviewees: Shadow Home Secretary Oliver Letwin MP (Conservative); Foreign Affairs Select Committee Gisela Stuart MP (Labour); Foreign Affairs Menzies Campbell MP (Liberal Democrats).
  Interviewer (IR): Mark Urban
- Second recording:
  Name of the panel: 'The Great Salt Scandal'
  Type of panel: socio-political
  Date: 18 June 2004

Duration: 10 minutes and 20 seconds.

Interviewees: Professor Graham MacGregor (Consensus Action on Salt and Health); Deputy Director General Martin Paterson (Food and Drink Foundation); Public Health Minister Melanie Johnson MP (Labour).

Interviewer (IR): Kirsty Wark

- Third recording:
  Name of the panel: 'Fourth State'
  Type of panel: social
  Date: 22 June 2004
  Duration: 9 minutes and 25 seconds
  Interviewees: John Lloyd (author); Melanie Phillips (Columnist, *Daily Mail*); Richard Sambrook (Director, BBC News)
  Interviewer (IR): Kirsty Wark

- Fourth recording:
  Name of the panel: 'Legitimate Political Attack'
  Type of panel: political
  Date: 21 May 2004
  Duration: 7 minutes and 47 seconds
  Interviewees: Shadow Defence Secretary Nicholas Soames (Conservative); former Minister Peter Mandelson (Labour)
  Interviewer (IR): Kirsty Wark

- Fifth recording:
  Name of the panel: 'Open Letter to the PM'
  Type of panel: political
  Date: 27 April 2004
  Duration: 8 minutes and 30 seconds.
  Interviewees: Former British Ambassador to Libya Oliver Miles; Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Donald Anderson (Labour).
  Interviewer (IR): Jeremy Paxman

- Sixth recording:
  Name of the panel: 'Interest Rates'
  Type of panel: socio-political
  Date: 7 May 2004
  Duration: 5 minutes and 40 seconds
  Interviewees: Chancellor of Exchequer 1993–7 Kenneth Clarke MP (Conservative); Chief Executive Will Hutton (The Work Foundation)
  Interviewer (IR): Kirsty Wark

- Seventh recording:
  Name of the panel: 'The Unconquerable World'
  Type of panel: social
  Date: 30 March 2004
  Duration: 7 minutes and 4 seconds.
  Interviewees: Professor Ruth Wedgwood; Jonathan Schell (author)
  Interviewer (IR): Kirsty Wark

- Eighth recording:
  Name of the panel: 'Tim Yeo on Tuition Fees'

Type of panel: socio-political
Date: 22 January 2004
Duration: 14 minutes and 22 seconds
Interviewees: Shadow Education Secretary Tim Yeo MP (Conservative); Vice-chancellor of University of Buckingham Dr Terence Kealey; Professor Nicholas Barr (London School of Economics)
Interviewer (IR): Jeremy Paxman
- Ninth recording:
  Name of the panel: 'Kerry Speech'
  Type of panel: social
  Date: 2 August 2004
  Duration: 5 minutes and 44 seconds
  Interviewees: Journalist Susan Page (*USA Today*); Editor Peter Beinart (*The New Republic*)
  Interviewer (IR): Kirsty Wark

Finally, we are also going to study the relationship between ECFs and a) the type of recording (i.e. political, social or socio-political), b) the interviewers (i.e. Wark, Urban and Paxman), and c) the interviewees (i.e. a politician or a journalist or an author, etc.). The analysis revealed the following results (see Tables 2–4):

TABLE 2. *ECFs and types of recordings*

	Political	*Socio-political*	*Social*
Time	1.523 seconds (25'23")	1.822 seconds (30'22")	1.333 seconds (22'13")
ECFs	43	21	17
Rate	2.8%	1.2%	1.3%

TABLE 3. *ECFs and interviewers*

	K. Wark	*M. Urban and J. Paxman*
Number of panels	6	3
Time	2.760 seconds (46')	1.918 (31'58")
ECFs	13	2
Rate	0.5%	0.1%

Table 4. *ECFs and interviewees*

	Politician	*Non-politician*
Number of interviewees	10	12
ECFs	48	18
Rate	4.8%	1.5%

Lexico-grammatical repertoire

The total number of ECFs found in this corpus is 81. After a having analysed all of them I arrived at the conclusion that they could be classified in five categories. The criteria used for this classification is twofold: syntactic and semantic. In this way, we find the following categories: totality, exclusiveness or zero, extreme adjectives or adverbs and superlatives, formulaic expressions, and softened or negated ECFs.

Totality These EFCs express the total number or amount of something or describe something which happens all the time. These are: seven 'always', one 'every', one 'full set of', 14 'all', four 'whole', three 'everybody', four 'entirely', one 'everything', one 'overwhelmingly', one 'totality', one 'full', one 'complete' and one 'completely'. Again, the most numerous of all ECFs is 'all'. Here is one example of each:

First recording: 26 September 2003:

Ms Stuart: I think that has been rather unfortunate over the last few weeks that there was **always** an assumption that the committee ehh divided on strict party political lines (0.5) ahh that has <u>not</u> been the case we have taken our duty ehh very seriously and have not seen it as a party political <u>exer</u>cise (0.4) and we've already seen eh quite pointless information like ehh there was an assumption that a Labour members had a:: blue set blue sheets of questions from which we asked our:: witnesses these are the kind of sheets of questions that **every** select committee clerk prepares for **every** select committee for **every** member (0.4) and one of the things which I <u>do</u> hope that a:: Lord Hutton will take up (0.3) is offer a full set of documents of the committee including ehh notes and preparations a:: which will allows us for the first time to really see the **complete** picture on the basis of which we arrived at our decisions.

Exclusiveness or zero In this category we include examples of absolute negation or instances of ECFs which describe qualities limited to a particular person or group. We found the following formulations: two 'simply', two 'none', two 'anybody', five 'never', one 'anything', and one 'only':

Eighth recording: 22 January 2004:

Mr Yeo: when when I've laid out the <u>details</u> of the policy I'm confident that a significant number will (0.2) [and I]

IR: ↑ [so the] answer is right now **none**?

Ninth recording: 2 August 2004:

Mr Beinart: I:: think most people have always imagined that it will be a vicious campaign I think the truth of the matter is given than Bush's ratings are below 50%, I don't think they will get above 50% he <u>has</u> to raise John Kerry's negatives it <u>will</u> be the **only** way he can win this race he has no <u>choice</u> but to go hard against John Kerry John Kerry will respond very strongly they remember the lessons of 1988 when Michael Dukakis didn't.

Extreme adjectives or adverbs and superlatives   This category is made up of adjectives which express the greatest degree of a particular quality and adverbs which denote the highest frequency of an event. In this group we found: three 'biggest', one 'best', four 'most', two 'worst', one 'highest', one 'oldest', one 'inevitable', one 'perfectly', three 'absolutely', and one 'extremely':

First recording: 26 September 2003:

IR: To assess the political impact of all this (0.4) are:: Oliver Letwin (0.2) for the Conservatives (0.4) Menzies Campbell for the Liberal Democrats and Gisela Stuart (0.5) for the Labour Party (0.4) Oliver Letwin if I can start with <u>you</u> (0.4) what> <is> <the> <<u>question</u>> you want answered **<u>most</u>** of all by this inquiry? (1.7)

Mr Letwin: well I suppose what we **<u>most</u>** needed to understand (0.5) is (0.8) a:: <<u>how</u>> that (0.5) dossier came to be in the condition (0.5) that it <u>did</u> come to be in (0.6) and what <u>role</u> the various actors (0.6) played in it (0.8) that is a more important question about the trust worthiness of the information given to Parliament and the the electorate.

Formulaic expressions   We found one example of a formulaic expression: 'across the board from the left to the right':

Third recording: 22 June 2004:

IR: Melanie what John Lloyd has also been talking about is that journalists have produced a <u>culture</u> of <u>scorn</u> (0.4) presumably you would even say that was **right across the <u>board</u> from the left to the right?**

Softened or negated ECFs   In this category we include ECFs which are modified in the sense that they are softened by a pre-modifier or negated: 'almost impossible', 'almost entirely', 'almost limitless', 'don't always' and 'didn't always':

First recording: 26 September 2003:

Mr Campbell: well that is a question that is **almost imp<u>oss</u>ible** to answer (0.5) a:: I think it's inevitable that there will be:: if you like ac<u>comp</u>anying <u>comm</u>entary (0.4) a:: Gisela's hopes I think are:: <u>vain</u> (0.5) the precedent of the Scot inquiry is not all that long ago in our minds (0.4) throughout the course of that there was es<u>sent</u>ially a running commentary (0.3) as witnesses came and gave evidence and that evidence was (0.5) subject to very con<u>sid</u>erable scrutiny by press and (0.4) politicians alike (0.4) I think from the Government's point of <u>view</u> the next two or three <u>months</u> (0.5) will be pretty difficult <u>INDEED</u> (0.4) so as far as the Government and the BBC are concerned let me say this by (0.4) way of conclusion (0.3) and it's not because this is a <u>BBC</u> <u>progr</u>amme (0.4) if it comes to a shoot out between the Government and the <BBC> (0.3) as to which is to be regarded as more credible (0.4) then I think the Government may be in for something of a <u>shock</u>.

Sixth recording: 7 May 2004:

Mr Clarke: I think so I <u>nev</u>er agree with conspiracy theories (0.3) and I think this
              one is <u>wrong</u>. I **don't always** agree with Mervyn King (0.4) **I didn't
              always** when he advised me when I did the job.

Discourse processes

Repetition is another discourse process we have found in the English corpus.
This is an important phenomenon to take into account because as Wong
(2000: 408) points out 'Indeed, repetition is a human, social activity, clearly
part of our everyday conduct and behavior and not just a marker of a "disfluent"
or "sloppy" speaker.'

   Up to eight repetitions were analysed: 1) 'most – most', 2) 'every – every –
every', 3) 'anybody – anybody', 4) 'completely unnecessary – completely un-
necessary', 5) 'entirely – entirely', 6) 'all these things – all these things – all these
things', 7) 'never – never', and 8) 'don't always didn't always'. Most of them
(i.e. the second, the third, the fifth, the seventh and the eighth) were produced
by the same speaker and in the same turn; two of them were uttered by different
speakers and in different turns (i.e. the first and the fourth); and only one was
delivered by the same speaker but in different turns (i.e. the sixth).

Second recording: 7 May 2004:

IR: Why can't you make a a commitment (0.2) that <u>no</u> packaged sandwich
              <u>no</u> packaged sandwich (0.4) will have more than 2.5 grams of salt?
              (0.2) It is **completely unnecessary** for it to have more than that
              ADMIT the commitment. (0.4)
Mr Paterson: because that's not the case it is **completely unnecessary** first of
              all [people ( )   ]
IR: [because the] food is not good e<u>nough</u> and you have to <u>mask</u> it?

The above example is interesting because an interviewee repeats an ECF which
has been previously used by the interviewer. The interviewer's utterance is very
aggressive and hostile and the interviewee decides to counter-attack using the
same ECF. This is a new discursive use of ECFs. Far from the 'ECF–challenge–
softener' sequence proposed by Edwards (2000), the challenge is substituted
by an attack in the form of a repetition. According to Tannen (1987, 1989) and
Couper-Kuhlen (1996) one reason why speakers use repetition is to express
affiliation or support:

> ... speakers who are engaged in verbal interaction with one another employ
> adaptive strategies which entail 'matching' their speech behaviour in one way or
> another to that of their interlocutor. On the verbal level this matching may involve
> repetition of words, expressions or whole utterances. (Couper-Kuhlen, 1996: 366)

Clearly, this is not the case here. In this example repetition is used to attack
the interlocutor. But as Johnstone et al. (1994: 7) explain 'Repetition is both
collaborative, on the textual level of jointly creating cohesion, and conflictual,
on the ideational level.' It is conflictual because they argue that 'One function of
repetition is to preface or to express disagreement ... The closer the repetition is to

identical, the closer it often is to direct disagreement' (Johnstone et al., 1994: 7). Bamford (2000: 119) has also noted that 'Another typical way of disagreeing with the previous speaker is to "echo" all or part of their immediately prior turn.'

In this extract, Mr Paterson uses the same ECF but applied to a different concept: the interviewer says that it is completely unnecessary that packaged sandwiches have more than 2.5 grams of salt and urges him to make a commitment and Mr Paterson answers that what it is completely unnecessary is to make a commitment. Nevertheless, it could also be argued that it is the interviewer himself who offers a softener version in the sense that he adds 'because the food is not good enough and you have to mask it'. The interviewer now provides a basis for adding the salt as in some sense necessary, albeit for an ignoble reason: 'you have to mask it'. This is, grammatically, a modal expression of deontic necessity ('have to' cf. 'must'), by which the interviewer promotes a modified notion of necessity, but restricted now to this rather ignoble motive of 'having to' mask the flavour of poor quality food.

Sequential organization in conversation

In relation to the sequential organization of ECFs in English, the following distribution was found:

Four ECFs were related to the topic organisation of turns: a speaker A begins his/her turn using the same ECF that a speaker B deployed when finishing his/her speech. In this way, ECFs are used as a device to give continuity. Additionally, as we all know most interviewees (mainly politicians) are normally accused of being deviant; using this strategy they show the audience that they are being direct. In the following extract the interviewer (Mr Urban) is asking Mr Letwin (Shadow Home Secretary) about the Hutton inquiry:

First recording: 26 September 2003:

Mr Urban: (...) What is the question you want answered **most** of all by this inquiry?
Mr Letwin: Well (0.6) I suppose (0.4) what we **most** needed to understand is (...)

Thirteen ECFs were used in prefatory (six) and concluding remarks (seven). The prefatory remarks were deployed by the interviewers with the purpose of providing a suitable background to the questions. So, we can say that one of the rhetorical uses of ECFs is to help the interviewer contextualize his/her question. In the following extract the interviewer Kirsty Wark is asking John Lloyd (journalist and author of a book about the relationship between the mass media and politics) about the role of journalists in the political arena in these times:

Third recording: 22 June 2004:

Ms Wark: John Lloyd, first of all, you assert that journalists of **all** opinions, including senior journalists at the BBC, publish and broadcast scorn for Parliament and claim that they should act as the true opposition to the Government of the day (0.5) What makes you say that?
Mr Lloyd: Columns by, for example, Jon Humphreys.

Similarly, ECFs were also used when an interviewee is concluding his/her answer. The conclusion of a speech is the most important part of a piece of discourse because that is the message most easily remembered by the audience. So, we can affirm that ECFs play a very important rhetorical role. In the following example Ms Gisela Stuart (Labour MP, Foreign Affairs Select Committee) is claiming that the Hutton Inquiry should follow the appropriate processes; she concludes saying that:

First recording: 26 September 2003:

Ms Stuart: (...) then that is **simply** the **best** evidence that is available at the time.

ECFs are also highly related to the turn-taking system because three of them were found in interruptions. As it was previously said (in the Spanish corpus) ECFs are so emotion-charged that they make people react in favour of/against them. In the following example Peter Mandelson (Labour MP) is enumerating Iraqi people's desires. Then he is interrupted by Kirsty Wark:

Fouth recording: 21 May 2004:

Mr Mandelson: (...) They want to see international reconstruction, and a fresh UN
                council resolution. They want to see **all** [these]
Kirsty Wark: [But] surely the domestic
                political [issue]
Mr Mandelson: [No] (0.4) hold on a moment (0.5) they want to see **all** these
                things in place (...)

ECFs were also used when the interviewer was providing a direct answer. So, ECFs help the speaker reinforce an answer which is definite and straightforward. Five instances were found, in the following one Mr Paterson (Deputy Director General, Food and Drink Foundation) answers in a very unequivocal way to a question posed by Kirsty Wark:

Second recording: 18 June 2004:

Ms Wark: What you are saying (0.4) then (0.3) is education is not our role?
Mr Paterson: No (0.4) not at **all** (0.4) we have been calling for education (...)

Similarly, when a speaker wants to emphasize an agreement or a disagreement s/he may use an ECF. As a matter of fact, three instances were found. They help the speaker highlight his/her position towards something. In the following extract Kirsty Wark is asking Kenneth Clarke (Conservative Party MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1993–7) about interest rates:

Sixth recording: 7 May 2004:

Ms Wark: Let's deal with this naughty issue of the truth. Is the Bank of England
                telling the truth when they say they are moving for inflationary
                reasons?
Mr Clarke: I think so (0.4) I **never** agree with conspiracy theories (...)

Finally, four different examples of ECFs were found right before and/or after a big pause which is not in a transition-relevance-place. These pauses are longer than 0.5 seconds. They are used in order to isolate the ECF for rhetorical reasons.

In the following transcription Peter Mandelson (Labour MP) is talking about the relationship between PM Blair and President Bush in concerning the Iraqi crisis:

Fourth recording: 21 May 2004:

Mr Mandelson: (...) That is much more important than any sort of grandstanding that Michael Howard advocates (0.4) trying to shun America or isolate the United States is **absolutely** (0.7) pointless.

Discussion

When we compare the number of ECFs found in the Spanish and in the English corpora (48 versus 81), we discover a considerable difference. English ECFs almost double Spanish ECFs. This difference could be due to three different factors: 1) cultural differences; 2) differences of style; and 3) the fact that one is more spontaneous than the other. In relation to cultural differences, it should be noted that Spitzbardt (1963) had already pointed out that American English is more hyperbole-prone than British English. So, it seems that culture could be an important factor to take into consideration. Nevertheless, we also have to take into account that whereas all Spanish recordings were pre-electoral political debates, English transcriptions were a mixture of social, socio-political and political recordings. Finally, it is necessary to mention that Spanish recordings were debates and that means that the turn-allocation system was very strict and the interviewer's role was that of a pure moderator who asked no questions and interviewees only spoke when it was their turn. In contrast, English recordings were much more lively in the sense that speakers could talk when they pleased and when the interviewer asked them questions.

If the second factor (i.e. differences of style) were relevant, that would imply that we should find many more ECFs in socio-political and social recordings. If we look at Tables 2 and 4, we will discover that the opposite happens: a) interviewers and interviewees deployed many more ECFs in political recordings (2.8 percent) than in socio-political (1.2 percent) or social recordings (1.3 percent); and b) politicians used more ECFs (4.8 percent) than any other type of interviewees (1.5 percent). So, it seems that politics favours ECFs. We all know that political language is a highly strategic type of speech where politicians are constantly using different linguistic tools to persuade their opponents. As has been previously mentioned, hyperbole is a well-known persuasive strategy commonly used when we want to distort the original meaning of something in order to gain advantage. Another common rhetorical strategy used when trying to persuade someone is repetition. One of the rules suggested by Roiz (1993) is the 'repetition of topics and ideas in an orchestral way' and Cockcroft and Cockcroft (1992: 131) explain that 'This [repetition] is probably the major resource of schematic rhetoric and the one with closest affinity to the spontaneous expression of emotion.' In the analysis of the corpora we found that a common discourse process used in Spanish and English was the repetition of ECFs. So, it would seem that ECFs are also closely connected to persuasion and exhortation.

This strategic use of ECFs has also revealed two more special uses which vary from the sequence ECF–challenge–softener proposed by Edwards (2000). We have found two important deviations:

- ECF–challenge–ϕ softener
- ECF–attack (repeated ECF)

In general, these two types of sequence are face-threatening acts in the sense that they put their addressee's face in jeopardy. There is another fact which supports this hypothesis: 62.5 percent (i.e. 30/48) of the ECFs found in the Spanish corpus were used in a negative context, that is, to utter a negative quality or to attack.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning the role of the interviewers (see Table 3). The Spanish interviewer is a moderator and s/he never uses a single ECF. The British interviewers behave in quite different ways. Mr Urban and Mr Paxman only used three ECFs (0.1%) and Ms Wark deployed six (0.5%). According to Clayman (1988, 2002) interviewers should display neutrality in news interviews but he warns that 'Maintaining neutralism becomes more complex within panel interviews where interviewers ask questions of different interviewees in succession' (Clayman, 2002: 1385). This explains two important things: 1) the reason why interviewers in general use so few ECFs;[4] and 2) the reason why it is so difficult for Kirsty Wark to maintain neutrality. If ECFs have a persuasive function, then it is normal that interviewers do not use them but this becomes more difficult in panel interviews because interviewers get so involved in the discussion that they often take sides.

NOTES

1. It means sententious, trying to appear wise, clever and important.
2. This is an English adaptation, the original table is in Spanish.
3. Smith (1657).
4. 0 percent of their talk in the Spanish corpus; and only 0.1 percent and 0.5 percent in the English one.

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