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CONFLICT DISCOURSE IN TELEVISION SERIES

**The Functions and Uses of Silence in Relation to
Social Class**

Linnea Elin Andersson

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Supervisor:	Roberta Piazza
Examiner:	Anna-Lena Fredriksson
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Abstract

Title: *Conflict Discourse in Television Series – The Functions and Uses of Silence in Relation to Social Class*

Author: Linnea Elin Andersson

Supervisor: Roberta Piazza

Abstract: This study paper investigates the correlation between social class and the use of silence in conflict discourse, by comparing the interactional style and turn-taking behaviour in two television series representing the upper and lower class. To this end, the study analyses conflict conversations in *The Crown* (UK) and *Shameless* (US) to show how in both scripts writers use specific linguistic elements to represent how these social classes are depicted in media. While in the aristocracy silence is presented as a salient feature to manage conflict, conflict communication in the working class is presented as constant verbal arguing and violence without interruptions of silence. Therefore, this analysis of communicative conflict behaviour is intended to exemplify the ways linguistic conflict strategies such as silence are used differently in certain class contexts and to seek explanations where these divergences could emerge from. Furthermore, it aims to investigate the influence of speaker's social status on their usage of specific conflict strategies such as silence and to emphasise its functionality for conflict. On the ground that both the US and the UK are English-speaking cultures that are part of the Western world, many studies within silence and conflict have taken both cultures together. In fact, a common assumption from these studies is that both cultures avoid the use of silence. In general, this study attempts to demonstrate that silence is a broad research field and that many factors are interacting in the application of silence, however, due to a lack of research in the area of social class in relation to silence and conflict, the discussion of the topic is of speculative nature.

Keywords: silence, television, conflict management strategies, conflict, conversation, turn-taking, communication, avoidance, confrontation, conversation analysis, qualitative research

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1. Introduction

Silence is often defined as the absence of words, but it is more than what most people are aware of. In fact, silence is inevitable in communication and has numerous functions (Jaworski 1992: 11ff.). While it can occur in harmonious and adversarial situations, it can also occur in intimate exchanges and in conversations between strangers or acquaintances. However, its functions differ depending on the specific context in which it occurs (Saville-Troike 1985: 11). To explore the functionality of silence and its role in conflicts, this paper investigates conflict conversations between intimate conversational parties in different social classes. The general aim of this study is to give the reader an insight into the use of silence of English-speaking conversational parties in relation to their social group. Therefore, I compare the behaviour of the aristocracy and the working class in conflict conversations as portrayed in two television series.

In order to gain an understanding of silence as a linguistic element, it is necessary to take a close look at conversation and its construction. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974: 721ff.) explain the basic functioning of conversation that consists of turns, overlaps, and interruptions such as pauses and longer silence sequences. Thus, according to their so-called Turn-Taking System (TTS), silence is a feature in interactions that can occur within or in between speakers' turns (Sacks et al. 1974: 714).

In studies of conflict management, silence is described as an avoiding conflict management strategy (Kim & Leung 2000: 239ff.). It can, for example, function as a time to reflect on an appropriate answer, or it can be used to silence the discussion, for example by leaving the conversation (Gendron 2011: 4). Hence, this paper investigates to what extent the membership of a particular social class is associated with the use of a particular conflict strategy, such as silence.

In general, the interpretation and use of silence is context and culture-sensitive. Sacks et al. (1974: 699ff.) found that the use of the Turn-Taking System differs among social groups because there are diverging views in a so-called normal interruption between turns and an existential difference in the tolerated length of silence. In Western cultures silence tends to be perceived as uncomfortable (Kim & Leung 2000: 241) and instead there is a preference for quick turn-taking, as “[t]ransitions (from one turn to a next) with no gap and no overlap are common” (Sacks et al. 1974: 700).

This study focuses on television language and the representation of social classes in the two particular TV series *The Crown* (UK) and *Shameless* (US). The assumption is that television artefacts are as authentic as everyday language is (Alvarez-Pereyre 2011: 47ff.) and TV language mirrors real life (Quaglio 2009: 69). Hence, it is plausible to assume that TV language is inspired by

close observation of actual interactions of various types. In order to succeed with a realistic representation, creators make significant choices for their characters' behaviour and one important feature to represent these characters and different social groups are specific linguistic choices (Quaglio 2009: 69). Furthermore, according to Trotta (2003: 18), cultural artifacts, such as television series can “provide important and verifiable evidence of in-group speech behavior and the way in which identity is negotiated through language”. Therefore, I assume that the usage of silence in television can provide indications of the interactional behaviour of the presented social groups in real life.

To this end, I analyse materials from two television series that portray the aristocracy and the working class, in terms of turn-taking and silence usage, and their consequence for the interaction, based on the assumption that the observation of interactional patterns in particular contexts can give clues about social constructs such as class. While I use the UK series *The Crown* to analyse the turn-taking behaviour of the aristocracy, the US series *Shameless* is used to portray the working class.

Admittedly, the US and UK are different in many aspects; however, I have considered these two series that have wide circulation in both countries and I have taken the liberty of treating the US and UK television dialogues together because they are often addressed in combination in most research on silence based on the assumption that silence in both societies is treated not dissimilarly (Nakane 2007: 2). In fact, many studies of silence take the US and UK together as they speak of the Western world in this context and the general assumption is that there is a marked difference in the use and perception of silence in Eastern and Western cultures (Nakane 2007: 2). While the general perception of silence in conversations in Western cultures is rather negative due to a preference for low-context verbal communication such as small talk (Jaworski, 2000: 113), silence is used frequently as a meaningful non-verbal communication tool in many Eastern cultures, such as Chinese and Japanese cultures (see Acheson, 2009: 19, Nakane 2006: 1812). The US and UK have often been observed in these East and West comparisons, and I therefore assume that they correspond to the general findings on silence in the Western world. For instance, Enninger lists several studies that focus on silence used by children in Eastern cultures such as Japanese and Chinese cultures (Saville-Troike 1982: 227, quoted in Enninger 1991:14) and contrasts them to the “relative talkativeness of children [...] [in] British, American, German [and] Dutch cultures”. Therefore, an important aspect of this study is that it is not intended to serve as a cross-cultural comparison of the US and UK but treats them together in order to analyse the portrayal of the upper and lower class in conflict discourse.

2. Previous Research

Silence has been long neglected in research, especially in the scientific field of communication, as studies of language function concentrated mainly on the function of words and did not value non-verbal communication tools such as silence (Saville-Troike 1997: 117). Moreover, by means of asserting silence as the total opposite of speech or comparing it to an undefined blank, it had for a long time been devalued in terms of its various functions. Nowadays, language studies have acknowledged silence as a communicative form and several investigations have highlighted its importance for interaction. Jaworski published the book *The Power of Silence* (1992), in which he gives a general introduction to the diversity of silence and its communicative functions. Many other researchers such as Saville-Troike (1997: 117) explicitly point out that silence can be used intentionally in conversation because, like words, it is an interactional element that has been proven to carry meaning.

Ever since silence attracted scholarly attention, it has become an interdisciplinary topic that has been investigated in many different areas such as ethnography and conversation analysis. In ethnography, studies such as Scollon and Scollon's (1995) work concentrated on differences between conversations in Eastern and Western cultures and revealed that there is a cultural distinction in the perception and acceptance of the length of silence. Saville-Troike (1985: 11) also emphasises the importance of the cultural context of conversation for an understanding of different silence behaviour in her study, as she found that social norms and values have an important influence on the generally prescribed amount of silence in different societies.

However, the general perception of silence in most Western cultures is negative. The fact that most Western cultures such as for example the US and UK often seem to expect from their members that they always have something to say, has led to a common definition of silence in the negative as non-talk or an absence of what conversationalists expect to hear (Jaworski 2000: 113). Therefore, interlocutors often feel responsible for maintaining verbal communication, which leads to silence being perceived as unpleasant, especially if it occurs unexpectedly (Kim & Leung 2000: 241).

Nevertheless, other studies reveal that these expectations are context-dependent, because even within verbose Western cultures, silence can be used and valued differently in specific situations and within certain social groups, as it can fulfil certain communicative goals depending on the context (Lehtonen & Sajavaara 1985, quoted in Acheson 2009: 19). Therefore, although there is a general trend in the use and perception of silence in Western cultures, the behaviour of certain groups may differ due to the surrounding context, expectations and cultural conventions of the

participants in this specific context (Acheson 2009: 18).

Many studies have already observed common silence behaviour in particular contexts in the Western world: While according to Krieger (2001) strangers' use of silence to mark interpersonal distance may be accepted as the norm, Newman (1982: 148) observed a tendency in encounters between acquaintances to "feel a 'pressure to talk'". However, in intimate relationships, silent moments do not appear to be so 'marked' and can display either distance or closeness of the relationship depending on the situational context (Acheson 2009: 24).

Researchers of conversation analysis have observed silence in interactions by analysing and timing turn-taking behaviour in certain social groups and contexts, and found a different length of interruptions depending on the situational contexts. Bull and Aylett (1998) came across lengthy inter-turn silences between conversationalists with eye contact by means of measuring inter-speaker intervals in conversations in three Western languages (Dutch, Swedish and English) during specific contexts such as eye contact and the involvement in activities such as reading a map. In situations where participants had the ability to see each other, the silences in speaker turns were longer, whereas the tolerance for longer silences was lower if there was no eye contact. Trimboli and Walker (1984) compared argumentative with cooperative dialogues, by timing speaker changes, and observed shorter gaps between conversational turns in argumentative discourse. The quick turn-taking in arguments was interpreted as a cue that participants might be competing for the floor.

Due to the variety of possible contexts in which silence occurs, and the resulting differences in meaning, the study of the functions of silence is a broad research field. Hence, in order to create a better understanding of its meaning in conversations, Johannesen (1974: 29) discusses in his paper numerous interpretations of silence from a Western point of view. He includes interpretations such as; thinking about what to say next, avoiding discussion of a sensitive issue or taking care not to say something hurtful (Johannesen 1974: 29). Moreover, silence can be a sign of agreement or disagreement, or that one is doubtful or emotionally overcome (Johannesen 1974: 29).

Due to the particular importance of context for the use of silence, the context of conflict, which was chosen for this study, needs to be discussed in more detail. Gendron (2011: 4) explicitly focuses on the functions of silence in conflict and explains that silence can function as a withdrawal from a discussion, as a time to reflect and formulate an appropriate response or as avoidance of certain topics in this context. Furthermore, interlocutors use different conflict management styles during conflict, which Kim and Leung (2000: 231) define as "patterned responses to conflict situations through diverse communication strategies". Two general and opposing strategies that are mentioned in their study are avoiding and direct or confronting conflict strategies; while confronting strategies are verbalised, avoiding strategies include the use of silence (Kim & Leung

2000: 239ff.).

Kim and Leung (2002: 437) emphasise the importance of the composition of the self for the use of a specific conflict strategy. Individuals with an independent self focus on individual goals and values in social contexts, which leads to a higher importance of self-expression and the expressive function of verbal communication, while individuals with an interdependent self create their self-images in relation to the surrounding relationships, and therefore find more significance in the relational function of verbal communication and often define themselves in relation to others, for example by means of their social position (Kim & Leung 2002: 437ff.). Therefore, members with an interdependent self are likely to make use of face-saving strategies, which are connected to avoiding conflict strategies such as silence, in order to maintain relational harmony, whereas independents, who do not place the same value on the surrounding relationships, show a lower application of face-saving strategies (Kim & Leung 2000: 241).

Overall, few studies have observed the function of silence as a conflict strategy in intimate relationships in Western cultures. Oduro-Frimpong (2007) analysed and interpreted silence as a conflict strategy in marital conflicts by means of conducting a questionnaire in which spouses were asked to talk about their silence usage in conflicts. In his results, he distinguishes different functions of silence in conflicts; firstly, silence can function as a contemplative tool, as it is used to reflect upon one's own, and one's opposite positions in conflict situations. It might thereby lead to a reasonable discussion at a later stage, which consequently results in a delayed but improved conflict management process (Oduro-Frimpong 2007: 297ff.). Secondly, he stresses the complementary role of silence in conflicts, as it can be used to think of an appropriate response and to control one's emotions. As this leads to fewer misunderstandings and emotional outbreaks, this function may also result in better conflict management. Thirdly, he mentions the strategic use of silence in which silence is used intentionally to end a conflict situation by omitting verbal communication altogether until the other person gives in (Oduro-Frimpong 2007: 297ff.).

Another interesting approach for the observation of conflict behaviour is the Model of Emotional Intelligence by Salovey and Grewal (2005), which highlights four emotional abilities; perceiving, utilising, comprehending and managing emotions. According to Salovey and Grewal (2005) the conversations of individuals that master these four parts of emotional intelligence are most likely positive, whereas incompetence in these skills can negatively affect their communication. My assumption is that there is a potential divergence of emotional intelligence between the aristocracy and the working class, which affects their turn-taking and conflict management.

In general, previous investigations of conflict and silence have not included the variable of

social class, and therefore this study may provide new insights into the function of silence in Western conflict discourse in relation to the membership of a particular social class.

3. Research Aim and Questions

The aim of this study is to broaden our perspective on patterns of conflict conversations and specifically on the functions of silence, by means of comparing the conflict behaviour of the royalty and the working class as presented in two TV-series. In order to examine the different conflict patterns and the effect of conversational silence as a conflict strategy, an analysis of the verbal context surrounding silence and the speakers' non-verbal behaviour is carried out and compared to verbalised conflicts. With the aim of presenting explanations for the class-dependent differences in conflict management, this study examines the ways in which the above mentioned theories of self concepts and the Model of Emotional Intelligence apply to the analysed characters in the selected television series.

While the overall goal of the study is to broaden the understanding of conversational silence as a conflict management strategy, the investigation of the two television series specifically aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the differences in interactional patterns during conflict and, in particular, in the application of silence in the upper class and the working class?
2. How could the differences in the usage of silence be explained from a social perspective?
3. If silence occurs, what functions can be assumed?
4. How does the use (or lack) of silence influence the conflict conversations?

4. Methods and Material

This in-depth discourse analysis examines a corpus of American and British conversations taken from several significant scenes of the TV-series *The Crown* and *Shameless*. In order to analyse the specific functions of the silences, it is necessary to consider the surrounding verbal text but also the speakers' gestures, gaze and posture, as the meaning of silence can only be interpreted by means of analysing its context. Therefore, the basic Turn Taking System (TTS) of conversations by Sacks et al. (1974) was chosen as the main framework to define and identify silence, and further tools of conversation analysis were used to analyse the behaviour before, during and after these silence sequences, to be able to interpret their functions, and also to identify and analyse significant verbalised conflict behaviour.

The Turn Taking System (TTS) by Sacks et al. (1974) highlights the existence of a structure between speaker-turns, or so-called *Turn Construction Units* (TCU), and indicates a set of rules for speakers alternation or *Turn Allocation Techniques*. One requirement of this model is that there is one speaker at a time who owns the turn but as soon as the current speaker has finished his turn, at the *Transition Relevance Place* (TRP), other speakers are allowed to take on the turn. This indicates that the TRP is important for the flow of conversation; here, three rules or *Turn Allocation Techniques* can be applied to uphold continuity of talk. The first rule states that the current speaker can choose the next speaker for the following TRP by addressing him verbally or with gestures, while the second rule says that another interlocutor can self-select, and rule number 3 implies that the current speaker can continue to speak himself. In this study, these rules are referred to as the *TTS rules*. There is no obligation to follow these rules, which is why silence occurs whenever conversationalists choose to obey these rules, such as for example, when no participant chooses to self-select or the selected speaker refuses to take the turn.

Silence in conversation is defined as an interruption in between these turns, which can disturb the flow of conversation. The silent sequences of various lengths that are defined in the Turn Taking System are *pauses*, *gaps* and *lapses*. Pauses are defined as silence sequences within the turn of a speaker (*Intra-Turn-Silences*), whereas gaps and lapses are located between the turns of the interlocutors (*Inter-Turn-Silences*), at the TRP. A possible reason to make use of a pause is that one has problems in finding the right words or hesitates to finish the answer. A gap might occur after a speaker has finished his turn and no one directly takes up the turn, but after a short silent interruption another speaker decides to self-select and break the silence, or the chosen speaker decides to take up the turn, and the interruption, therefore, is minimised. A lapse is described as a long interruption of conversation or discontinuance in the flow of conversation, when no nomination of a new speaker has taken place, the current speaker does not continue to speak and no one self-selects. Since it is a long silent period it can possibly lead to a discontinuity of conversation.

As Sacks et al. (1974) define lapses as longer gaps and do not give a time specification, a lapse is defined by myself, whenever the silence sequence is longer than 10 seconds or there is a discontinuance of conversation. On the grounds that this study concentrates on marked interruptions in conversation and the effect of it on the conflict, the main focus is set on lapses and gaps, whereas I consider light and more frequently occurring silence sequences such as pauses only if they are longer than 3 seconds.

I have proceeded by viewing all episodes of season 1 of each series to be able to identify conflict conversations, where several silence sequences longer than 3 seconds were given, or, vice

versa, its absence. Thereafter, I have applied my methodology on excerpts from the two TV programmes if they contained noticeable and relevant silence sequences between speaker turns in a conflict context, or if the conflict had other remarkable features such as no interruptions. All sequences that I chose for analysis are face-to-face dialogues consisting of two intimate participants of various gender and age.

This is a qualitative study, since the in-depth analyses presented in this study are so-called judgmental samples, i.e. a selection of excerpts from scenes that I have declared as relevant for the aim of this study. A quantitative analysis of silence would have been very time-consuming for the restricted scope of this study, as the television material comprises roughly 1175 minutes for a manual analysis, of which Season 1 of *Shameless* consists of 12 episodes (595 minutes in total) and *The Crown* consists of 10 episodes (580 minutes in total). Moreover, many previous studies on silence have been of observational nature; an obvious reason for this might be the fact that silence as a linguistic element is difficult to measure. The transcripts of both TV-series were retrieved from the website <https://sublikescript.com>.

The British drama series *The Crown*, which was broadcasted for the first time in 2016, is based on the historical biography of Queen Elizabeth. Throughout the series, the royal family experiences a lot of challenges, both in terms of their powerful position and duty towards their country, and their own family.

The series *Shameless* US, which was first broadcasted in 2011, deals with a lower-class family consisting of a lone father with an alcohol and drug addiction and his 6 children. The disregard of the father's responsibility towards his children has led to a rather bad relationship with them, and his eldest daughter Fiona takes care of the younger siblings. In fact, this is an American series that is based on the original *Shameless* UK and, admittedly, it would have been reasonable to compare the British upper and lower class, however, due to restricted accessibility of the UK series, I decided to analyse the US version. Moreover, the plot of season 1 of *Shameless* US is almost identical to the plot in the British version.

In general, this paper is not intended to serve as a cross-cultural analysis but seeks to investigate the influence of interlocutors social position on their conflict behaviour and especially on the use of silence. As explained above, many studies on silence behaviour have taken the UK and US together as part of the Western world with similar perceptions of silence. I am aware that this is very general in the sense that certain cultural variables have been excluded from the analysis, however, due to the limited scope of this study, the main focus was set on exploring instances of conflict and silence in different social classes, and to examine where possible differences could emerge from. In general, the difficulty of investigating silence, and especially the very rare

instances of silence in television have greatly limited the selection of my material.

5. Results and Discussion

In the following section, the comparison of conflict conversations of two relational contexts, namely lovers and siblings of each social class, gives an insight into the interaction characteristics of the speech communities with different class backgrounds, as depicted in TV. In each case, I first describe the context of the analysed scenes, before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the language behaviour and how silence is used in turn-taking.

5.1. Conflicts Between Lovers

5.1.1. Analysis of Characters in *The Crown*

The first relational context analysed in this paper is the turn-taking behaviour between lovers in both social classes. In the aristocracy, which is presented in *The Crown*, I am analysing two conflict conversations between Queen Elizabeth and her husband Philip the Duke of Edinburg, who are facing problems in their relationship since Elizabeth was appointed Queen. Her new powerful public position has made her superior to her husband in several monarchical duties and influenced their partnership by arousing Philip's feelings of being constricted in many parts of his life. An evident conflict conversation with numerous silence sequences can be found in episode 5 of season 1, which is displayed in *Extract 1*.

Preceding the analysed scene, Philip has complained to Elizabeth that he feels inferior in their relationship, since he has no right to make any decisions and therefore, Elizabeth has delivered him the task to plan her upcoming coronation which he must, nonetheless, adhere to the monarchical regulations. However, Elizabeth found out that Philip did not abide by the agreement, as he proposed a complete change of events with the aim of modernising the coronation.

Extract 1

(1) *The Crown*: S1/E5

1 Elizabeth: I'll support you in the televising.
2 (4 seconds) *gap*
3 Philip: You won't regret it.
4 Elizabeth: On one condition.
5 (4 seconds) *pause*
6 That you kneel.
7 (13 seconds) *lapse*
8 Philip: Who told you?
9 Elizabeth: My Prime Minister. He said you intended to refuse.

As can be seen from *Extract 1*, there are 3 silence sequences in line 2, 5 and 7. After a discussion marked by quick turn-taking, Elizabeth decides to approach Philip in his idea to televise the coronation. By looking at him while giving her consent (“I’ll support you in the televising.”, line 1) and keeping eye-contact with Philip during and after finishing her turn, she signals that she has allocated him the turn (TTS rule 1). Since this is a surprising approval for Philip, it is followed by a gap of 4 seconds in line 2, until he takes up the turn (“You won’t regret it.”, line 3). In this case, silence is an expression of Philip’s emotions that leave him speechless or as Baker (1955: 159) noted, emotions can “strike us dumb”.

The approval in line 1 is an attempt to soothe him with one consent, which might make him more willing to accept the condition that she is about to impose. After Elizabeth declares that a condition is to be followed (“On one condition.”, line 4), she interrupts her turn with a 4-second *intra-turn* pause (line 5). This brief silence functions as preparation for an order that is an expression of *negative politeness* (Brown & Levinson, 1978); Elizabeth hesitates to make the command, and the silence serves the purpose of saving face (Brown & Levinson, 1978: 66). Thereby, the silence functions as a time delay to prepare the hearer for an unwanted response, before Elizabeth continues her turn and expresses the condition she wants Philip to fulfill (“That you kneel.”, line 6). As Levinson (1983) describes, silence is often used when an upcoming turn will be disagreeable as it is a common pattern to delay an answer one knows will be disliked.

As Elizabeth anticipated, Philip is shocked, since he did not expect her to force him to kneel and now finds himself in an inferior position again. He looks at her with disbelief, turns away and takes a few steps, accompanied by a lapse (line 7) of 13 seconds length, until he lastly takes up the turn (“Who told you?”, line 8), which prevents a discontinuance of conversation. This situation is another example for the use of silence when an emotional reaction prevents from finding the right words to formulate a response (Johannesen 1974: 29).

As the silence is lengthy, it develops from an emotionally evoked silence to a form of decision making to continue the conversation or not; at first Philip wants to walk off, as he moves a few steps away from Elizabeth, but shortly thereafter he turns around, looks at her with a reproachful facial expression and takes up the turn again. This is a form of reluctance (Johannesen 1974: 29), as he is angry and wants to end the conversation, however, his curiosity stops him from doing so. Philip’s question (“Who told you?”, line 8) implies that he suspects that Elizabeth was informed of his intention to refuse to kneel down, while Elizabeth’s answer (“My Prime Minister. He said you intended to refuse.”, line 9) confirms that Elizabeth already knew that Philip would not accept her condition and it would most likely lead to further conflicts.

Elizabeth’s confession triggers another discussion with quick turn-taking which leads to

another turn exchange with significant silence behaviour. In the discussion, which can be seen in *Extract 2*, Philip criticises Elizabeth's superior position as a female, since he expects both participants in a marriage to have equal positions. While Philip refers to his role as a husband who has to kneel down before his wife, Elizabeth demands him to accept that as Queen she is forced to be superior in order to remain a higher ideal for the people.

Extract 2

The Crown: S1/E5

10 Philip: Are you my wife or my Queen?
11 Elizabeth: I'm both.
12 Philip: I want to be married to my wife.
13 Elizabeth: I am both and a strong man would be able to kneel to both.
14 Philip: I will not kneel before my wife.
15 Elizabeth: Your wife is not asking you to.
16 Philip: But my Queen commands me?
17 Elizabeth: Yes.
18 Philip: I beg you make an exception for me.
19 (6 seconds) *gap*
20 Elizabeth: No.
21 (14 seconds) *lapse*

At the climax of their quick turn-taking, Philip makes a final demand ("I beg you make an exception for me.", line 18) of not having to kneel on Elizabeth's coronation. Thereafter, Elizabeth's acceptance of turn is delayed with a gap of 6 seconds (line 19), which functions as another negative politeness command, as she attempts to calm the situation by waiting before giving an answer that she knows will be disliked (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

As soon as Elizabeth takes up the turn and gives her no-response ("No.", line 20), this provokes Philip's emotional peak. As Philip is extremely dissatisfied with her reply, he looks at her with an angry facial expression and does not take up the turn, which results in a 14 seconds lapse (line 21), during which he turns around and moves a few steps away from Elizabeth, while she keeps her gaze on him. After turning around one last time to look at her, he lastly walks off without taking up the turn and thus leaves the conversation in silence. Silence here is used to express detachment (Johannesen 1974: 29) as Philip does not believe that further discussion can solve the conflict. His behaviour clarifies that there is no further wish for communication and in this case, a refusal of the TTS rules leads to a discontinuance of conversation.

To summarise, conversational silence is a predominant tool in the conflict discourse of the couple that leads to restricted arguments, and consequently both interlocutors clearly make use of an avoiding conflict management strategy. While Elizabeth makes use of silence to save face and to calm down the conflict, Philip's use of silence displays the strong awareness of social positions in the aristocracy. Philip tries to interfere with Elizabeth's superior position as Queen but his silence

functions as a sort of defeat, as he knows his inferior position lastly forces him to agree to her condition.

Extract 3

The Crown: S1/E10

1 Elizabeth: Well, the Archbishops just made themselves clear, too.
2 Philip: You don't need to listen to them, surely?
3 Elizabeth: As Head of the Church of England, I thought I might.
4 Philip: Oh. Well, in the name of the people that live with you
5 and love you,
6 might I suggest not being Head of the Church for a minute.
7 Or Head of State, or Head of the Commonwealth of Nations,
8 or the Army, or the Navy, or the Government, or the Fount of
9 Justice, or the whole damn circus, frankly.
10 Elizabeth: And be what?
11 Philip: A living, breathing thing, a woman. A sister. A daughter. A wife.
12 [knocks] (7 seconds) gap
13 Servant: All ready for you, Your majesty.
14 (5 seconds) gap
15 Philip: Elizabeth...
16 (5 seconds) lapse

Extract 3 displays another conflict discourse between Philip and Elizabeth, in which two gaps can be found in line 12 and 14. Philip plays down Elizabeth's position as Queen as he describes all her duties as head of the monarchy as a "damn circus" (line 9). Furthermore, by asking her to be "A living, breathing thing, a woman. A sister. A daughter. A wife." (line 11) he indirectly claims that she has acquired an emotionless and inhumane behaviour. This statement is followed by a gap of 7 seconds (line 12) since Elizabeth does not take up the turn. During this silence Elizabeth and Philip have eye contact, and while Philip's facial expression is serious, Elizabeth looks surprised.

This silence is another example of emotions leading to a loss of words (Baker 1955: 159), as Elizabeth's emotions of shock prevent her from finding the right answer. Elizabeth's silence is interrupted by a servant who walks into the room and self-selects (TTS rule 2) ("All ready for you, Your Majesty.", line 13). After averting her gaze from Philip to look at the servant, who then leaves, Elizabeth does not take up the turn, which results in another gap of 5 seconds, until she intends to leave the room in silence and thus actively refuses to follow the TTS rules. This is another example of an emotively evoked silence that develops into an expression of detachment or distance (Acheson 2009: 24) and signals an avoidance of communication (Gendron 2011: 4).

However, Philip seems to have realised that his words were too sharp, and thus he continues to speak himself (TTS rule 3) in order to prevent a conflicting discontinuity of conversation ("Elizabeth...", line 15). Nonetheless, Elizabeth does not react on his attempt as she still refuses to follow the TTS rules and walks off regardless, in order to signal her strong disinterest in continuing the conversation. This silence is also defined as *attributable silence* (Levinson, 1983), which is

described as the phenomenon, when the next speaker is chosen by the current speaker but does not respond.

The conversation analysis of these scenes has revealed an explicit preference for avoiding conflict strategies through the use of numerous pauses, gaps and lapses. Both Elizabeth and Philip present a similar behavioural pattern during these conflict conversations, as they make use of numerous silence sequences and remain respectful by leaving the conversation, rather than continuing to argue with further accusations. The functions of silence used in these extracts are attributed to respect, politeness, and controlling emotions, instead of openly discussing problems.

Interestingly, Salvoney and Gewals (2005) explain that if there is a high level of emotional intelligence, conversationalists can consider the emotional state of the other conversationalists and can then, if they assume that their conversation partner is in a negative emotional state, adapt their reply according to this emotional condition, or make use of silence to contemplate of a suitable reply that may lead to a reduction of conflict. In many instances of silence used by the aristocracy, it seems like they consider the feelings of their conversational partners and attempt to reduce the conflict. Although their verbal expressions and body language indicate that they are emotional, I assume that a high extent of self-control makes them capable of suppressing their emotions, which might also be interpreted as a strategy to avoid a lack of respect.

These findings indicate that members of the aristocracy have a rather interdependent self-construal on the grounds that they care about their social relationships. The royal family, which is a powerful family with an important public position, has to take care of surrounding relationships to maintain the family's stability and therefore a core value is family solidarity. This relational dependence makes them a collectivist group where members have been raised to form interdependent self-concepts and therefore, avoiding conflict strategies are used to save face and reduce the chance to hurt conversational partners.

5.1.2. Analysis of characters in *Shameless*

Compared to the aristocracy, the working class presents an opposing behavioural pattern in conflict conversations, as the following in-depth analysis of lovers in *Shameless* reveals. This series deals with a family of a lower socio-economic status and I have chosen to concentrate on conflict conversations of the love partners Fiona and Steve. During a night out, Fiona gets to know Steve, a young adult from a wealthy home who is making a living by stealing cars and with whom she develops a romantic relationship in the course of season 1.

Preceding the analysed scene, Frank, the alcoholic father of the family, has hit one of his sons

and this has prompted Steve to punish Frank by transporting him to Canada with one of his stolen cars. Therefore, Fiona receives a call from the Canadian police stating that her father is being held in a cell, which forces the family to come up with a plan on how to bring Frank back home. In the given scene, which is displayed in *Extract 4*, Fiona confronts Steve as she suspects him being responsible for the deed.

Extract 4

Shameless: S1/E2

1 Fiona: How'd you get my dad to Toronto?
2 Steve: Me? Are you kidding?
3 Fiona: Canadian health warnings.
4 Steve: I, uh, smuggled him over the border in the trunk of my car. Uh,
5 they didn't check going in.
6 Fiona: How'd you get him in the trunk?
7 Steve: He was so plastered, he would have jumped into a coffin.
8 Fiona: And why Canada?
9 Steve: Uh, I had to run a car to Detroit. Plan was dump him someplace
10 weird in Michigan, Flint maybe. When I saw the signs for Toronto,
11 the idea kind of just... snowballed.
12 Fiona: And you think it-it's funny?
13 Steve: No. Funny would have been Newfoundland.
14 Fiona: Because he took a swing at you?
15 Steve: No, because he's got a family that he doesn't give a shit about.
16 Smashing Ian in the face?
17 Steve: Uh...
18 Fiona: What my dad is, what my family is, has fuck all to do with you!
19 You left him there...you get him back!

In *Extract 4* Fiona initiates the conflict conversation with a direct accusation with features of colloquial speech (“How'd you get my dad to Toronto?”, line 1), which Steve denies (“Me? Are you kidding?”, line 2). However, after Fiona throws Steve's empty cigarette package at him and comments on its package (“Canadian health warnings.”, line 3), he admits his action (“I, uh, smuggled him over the border in the trunk of my car.”, line 4). While Fiona interrogates him about the procedure, Steve responds calmly, however, his use of irony (“He was so plastered, he would have jumped into a coffin.”, line 7) implies that he does not take the situation and the consequences of his action seriously. Fiona's angry facial expression and her crossed-armed posture imply that she is in a high emotional state of rage. When she questions Steve's behaviour (“And you think it-it's funny?”, line 12) and he replies with another ironic statement (“No. Funny would have been Newfoundland.”, line 13), in addition to him interfering with her family circumstances (“No, because he's got a family that he doesn't give a shit about. Smashing Ian in the face?!”, line 15), Fiona reaches her emotional climax; she punches Steve in the face and openly expresses her opinion (“What my dad is, what my family is, has fuck all to do with you!”, line 18).

To summarise, a close observation of the conflict discourse in the working class reveals

numerous features of direct and confronting conflict management strategies such as constant quick turn-taking, colloquial speech, offensive language, irony and violence as climax. The only interruption that is identified between the conversational turns is Fiona's physical violence towards Steve, which comes unexpectedly as it is contrasted by the constant flow of turns.

Another proof of this interactional pattern can be found in another conflict between Steve and Fiona, which is illustrated in *Extract 5*. Preceding the scene, Fiona has read a message by another girl on Steve's phone and she therefore wants to clarify the situation in the following excerpt.

Extract 5

Shameless: S1/E8

- 1 Fiona: Okay, one...
- 2 Steve: Oh, God, one. One. One. One.
- 3 Fiona: I'm not finished yet. One...
- 4 Steve: Ugh.
- 5 Fiona: ...or two? [Fiona hits Steve with his phone]
- 6 Steve: Oh, God. One.
- 7 Fiona: Who the fuck is Candace?
- 8 Steve: Who?
- 9 Fiona: Yeah, that's what I'm asking you.
- 10 Steve: How do you know?
- 11 Fiona: So there's something to know?

In *Extract 5*, the conflicting discussion is initiated by Fiona in an unexpected way by making use of physical violence, as she hits Steve's phone against his head, whilst preceding this violence the situation was harmonious. Immediately after her violent attack she openly expresses her problem ("Who the fuck is Candace?", line 7), whilst staring into Steve's eyes, and thus allocating him the turn (TTS rule 1). Again, this is not a careful approach of indicating a conflict but instead aims at being straightforward, since Fiona is hurt and does not hold back these emotions. In addition to her facial expression which enhances how angry she is, her use of strong language ("fuck", line 7) implies this direct and unthoughtful behaviour. Steve, who is stunned by her sudden altered mood, quickly takes on the turn ("Who?!", line 8), which leads to a further course of quick turn-taking.

The working class as portrayed in these extracts, clearly has a different way of approaching conflict, as they are more direct and emotionally driven and thus, their conflict behaviour is characterised by direct and confronting strategies instead of avoiding strategies.

In terms of emotional intelligence, it becomes clear that the conversation parties do not consider the emotions of their conversational partners, but rather focus on themselves and their own release of emotions. Physical violence is a salient part of this lack of self-control and the contrasting act of behaving nicely and suddenly merging to violent, aggressive behaviour is used to portray the uncontrolled and emotionally charged communication style of the working class.

My assumption is that the observed members of the working class have developed independent self-concepts as they were forced to take their own responsibility and take care of themselves from an early age, and thus place a higher significance on individual goals and interests rather than on their social relationships.

5.2. Conflicts Between Siblings

Another case of conflict conversations that is presented in both series is between siblings. This analysis of a second relationship is of importance to strengthen my results and to ensure that the above mentioned observations are not individual characteristics only.

5.2.1. Analysis of Characters in The Crown

In season 1 of *The Crown* the once strong sister bond between Elizabeth and her sister Margaret is declining ever since Elizabeth has been crowned and thus has to live up to the strong and inhumane character of the Queen. As a result of her public position, she is forced to deny Margaret to marry her partner Peter, although she had promised her the possibility of a marriage if she followed specific conditions. The scene, which is displayed in *Extract 6*, takes place right after Margaret has been told that she is forced to wait for another two years to marry Peter.

Extract 6

The Crown: S1/E6

1 Elizabeth: Margaret!
2 Margaret: No!
3 Elizabeth: Margaret! Just until your 25th birthday.
4 Then, you would be free to do as you wish.
5 Margaret: Look me in the eye and tell me.
6 Is it a posting or is it a banishment?
7 Elizabeth: It's a posting.
8 I promise. It's just a way of managing the story,
9 keeping it off the front pages.
10 Margaret: Not a heartless attempt to split us up?
11 Elizabeth: No, of course not.
12 Papa did the same for Philip and me.
13 He made us wait.
14 Margaret: For three months.
15 This is for two years.
16 Think of it.
17 Two years!
18 (7 seconds)- *gap*
19 Why did you even dangle Scotland under my nose?
20 (5 seconds) - *gap*
21 Elizabeth: Sorry.
22 (24 seconds) - *lapse*
23 Margaret: All right.
24 If I do this for you, will you promise me that this banishment...
25 Elizabeth: Posting.
26 Margaret: This banishment won't start until after our trip to Rhodesia?
27 You know how much we've been looking forward to it.

28 (5 seconds) - *gap*
29 You're going to deny us that as well?
30 Elizabeth: It's the sensitivity of you two together.
31 The photographers. It would overshadow everything.

In *Extract 6*, one can locate four silence sequences, three of them are gaps, whereas one is a lapse. The scene starts with Margaret leaving the sister's previous conversation and Elizabeth running after her to continue the discussion ("Margaret!", line 1), however, Margaret signals her disinterest in communicating with her ("No!", line 2). Nevertheless, Elizabeth takes up the turn again (TTS rule 3) and tries to soothe her by emphasising that she only has to wait until her 25th birthday to marry Peter. This statement does not succeed in appeasing her as Margaret, later on, makes use of a repetition ("This is for two years.", line 15, "Two years!" line 17) which functions as an accusation that is supposed to emphasise the length of this time period.

This accusation is followed by a gap of 7 seconds (line 18) in which Margaret expects Elizabeth to reply, as she has allocated her the turn by turning her gaze on her (TTS rule 1) and furthermore addresses her ("Think of it.", line 16). Since Elizabeth, however, does not take up the turn, Margaret continues to speak herself (TTS rule 3) by making use of another accusation ("Why did you even dangle Scotland under my nose?", 19).

Thereafter, Elizabeth does not take up the turn immediately, which results in another gap of 5 seconds (line 20). As Elizabeth does not know how to defend herself, silence is used to search for the right words (Johannesen, 1974: 29). When she finally takes up the turn, she makes a simple apology ("Sorry", line 21) which indicates that she is aware of her wrongdoing and functions as a way of appeasing her.

As the next speaker has not been chosen and no self-selection takes place, Elizabeth's excuse is followed by a lapse of 24 seconds (line 22). Both sisters neither know how to continue the conversation nor solve the conflict and this silence can, therefore, be interpreted as an additional "thinking time" (Johannesen, 1974: 29) to find the right words. At one point during this lengthy lapse, Elizabeth pets Margaret's leg as another attempt to soothe her, however, Margaret rejects this action by pushing her hand away. In fact, this lapse could have led to a discontinuity of conversation, but Margaret self-selects (TTS rule 2) ("All right.", line 23) and makes another suggestion in order to solve the conflict ("This banishment won't start until after our trip to Rhodesia? You know how much we've been looking forward to it.", line 26-27). Thereby, the lapse could have led to a turning point in the conflict, as both participants took their time to reflect and formulate a suiting response as Margaret's new idea to compromise shows. Margaret looks at Elizabeth to signal that she has allocated her the turn and is expecting her to express her opinion,

however, Elizabeth does not take up the turn, which results in another gap of 5 seconds (line 28). This behaviour indicates that the compromise will also be rejected by Elizabeth, as her silence is another case of avoidance of giving a response another interlocutor might not agree with (Gendron 2011: 4), and she thereby wants to save face (Kim & Leung 2000: 241).

Therefore, Margaret continues to speak (TTS rule 3) in order to clarify the situation herself by asking a direct question (“You’re going to deny us that as well?”, line 29), which reveals that she is reading from Elizabeth’s behaviour that her new suggestion will not be accepted either. This interpretation is being confirmed by Elizabeth’s reply (“It’s the sensitivity of you two together”, line 30), which functions as a justification why she cannot allow Margaret’s suggestion.

In terms of conflict management, Elizabeth clearly makes use of an avoiding conflict strategy, whereas Margaret displays features that indicate a comparatively confronting conflict behaviour, as she expresses everything that is on her mind. In general, Margaret’s turn-taking behaviour reveals her strong and feisty personality, as she takes up the turn whenever Elizabeth remains silent and she is often the one breaking the silence. Nonetheless, Margaret does not fight back verbally or physically when the tension is high, but remains silent instead, and thus, her behaviour lastly corresponds to the observed conflict pattern of the aristocracy.

Elizabeth’s very frequent use of silences can be grounded on the fact that she has the highest social position of the royal family and she is therefore forced to balance her position as Queen with her role as a sister and wife. She is under immense pressure to fulfil these contradicting roles and must be particularly careful about her duties and her behaviour. Margaret, on the other hand, must have been raised with more freedom and could therefore possibly have developed a rather independent self-concept. However, although Margaret seems to have more features of an independent self than Elizabeth, her use of silence displays that she is still aware of her social role and her dependence on the family.

5.2.2. Analysis of Characters in *Shameless*

For the sibling relationship in *Shameless*, I am analysing a conflict conversation between the brothers Lip and Ian, which is displayed in *Extract 7*. Preceding the scene, Lip has found out about Ian’s homosexuality and his affair with a married man and he has therefore been waiting for Ian to come home to initiate a conflict conversation.

Extract 7

Shameless: S1/E1

1 Lip: He bought them for you, didn’t he?

2 Those shoes. He's married! With kids! What else does
 3 he buy you, Ian?!
 4 Ian: Stuff. Now and again.
 5 Lip: And you're happy with that? What's that make you, huh?
 6 A fucking kept boy at best.
 7 Ian: Hey!
 8 Listen to me, stupid! You think you know everything, but you
 9 know shit! Ask me what I've got him, huh? Ask me! CDs, dozens of
 10 CDs! Stuff that he's never heard of, stuff I think he might
 11 like, 'cause I want him to like the same things that I do.
 12 And a couple Sox tickets for his birthday. So what's that make you,
 13 Lip, huh? It makes you wrong, you fucking smart asshole! Now go
 14 back to Kash and promise him that you're not gonna tell anybody
 15 'cause he's done nothing to be sorry for, nothing.
 16 (12 seconds) - lapse
 17 Lip: "Fake Muslim cheats on white fundamentalist wife with gutless gay boy."
 18 Says more about White Sox fans than it does for the rest of us.

In *Extract 7* Lip indicates the conversation by making neutral assumptions and consequently, Ian replies in a calm tone, however, as soon as Lip reproaches Ian heavily (“What’s that make you, huh? A f*cking kept boy at best.”, line 5-6), Ian starts screaming (“Hey!”, line 7) and throws his shoe at Lip aggressively. Subsequently, Ian does not repel these accusations verbally, but instead responds in violence; he drags Lip from his bed and the brothers start to fight each other, and their facial expressions signal their high emotional state of rage. Not until Ian has caught Lip in a stranglehold and is thereby making him unable to defend himself, Ian is willing to reject the allegations by clarifying the situation (“Listen to me, stupid! You think you know everything, but you know shit!”, line 8-9). Interestingly, this statement is followed by one instance of silence; after 12 seconds in which neither Lip nor Ian take up the turn and it thus makes the impression that Ian has won the discussion, Lip makes a sarcastic comment (“Fake Muslim cheats on white fundamentalist wife with gutless gay boy. Says more about White Sox fans than it does for the rest of us.”, line 17-18). Thereby, Lip tries to save his face and makes use of a lapse in order to think of a retort, as he obviously wants to have the last word. After this moment one can observe Ian attacking Lip again, however the scene ends and one does not see how the fight continues.

This conflict implies that both participants express everything that is on their mind and show their emotions openly. Furthermore, their use of offensive language (“fucking”, line 6 and “stupid” line 8) is another indication of their impulsive conflict behaviour.

Again, the features of conflict behaviour presented in the given scene indicate that the working class is represented as managing their conflicts with direct and confronting strategies, rather than with avoiding strategies. It is an endless fight for turns; as soon as the conversationalists cannot think of a retort they try to come up with new accusations or make use of violence to continue fighting. Even the only case of silence used in this context is not intended to avoid or reduce the conflict, but serves to find a new retort to intensify the conflict.

5.3. Summary of Analysis of Conflict Conversations

In *The Crown*, numerous conflict scenes were identified in which members of the aristocracy make use of frequent silence sequences in between turns, in order to remain respectful, control the conflict or demonstrate that they are not willing to continue the conversation. Silence appears regularly, as it is used as an avoiding conflict strategy; it is common to use silence by simply not taking the turn rather than to fight with words. The working class in *Shameless* has a different approach in conflict discourse as they prefer to rely on verbal means and release all emotions or even physical violence in their discussions without interruptions between their turns. Thereby, the working class makes use of a confronting conflict strategy.

The conflict behaviour of the working class suggests a lack of emotional intelligence and self-control, as they do not consider the perspective or emotions of their dialogue partners, and as soon as their body language indicates that they are emotional, they express everything that is on their mind. Furthermore, the use of violence and offensive language indicates that they try to hurt their counterparts in order to win the argument and make themselves feel better. On the other hand, the aristocracy holds back their emotions and leaves the conversation in silence, which can be a sign of a higher amount of emotional intelligence and self-control.

Due to a different socialisation in both social groups, it is assumed that they have developed different self-concepts, which have an influence on the use of different conflict strategies (Kim & Leung 2002: 437). The clearly distributed social roles in the aristocracy have led to a rather interdependent self, and one can find a clear power balance between the interlocutors; Elizabeth is in a superior position to Philip, who still tries to interfere with her power but lastly resorts to silence, which can be interpreted as a sign of defeat and his inferiority. Although Margaret is a strong character, the superior position of Elizabeth as Queen leads to a restricted conflict, and she has to accept the conditions and, thus, their conflicts end in silence. The members of the working class have no power imbalances and can express everything they want without any restrictions or conditions.

5.4. Exceptions

Although the preceding analysis presents a general pattern in the usage of conflict strategies for

each social class, there are exceptions, which are highlighted in this section. In episode 8 of season 1 in *The Crown*, which is displayed in *Extract 8*, Elizabeth is yelling and attacking Philip physically by throwing objects at him. It is an outstanding scene, in which one does not observe an avoiding conflict behaviour with numerous silence sequences, but a situation where Elizabeth does not seem to be able to control her behaviour.

Extract 8

The Crown: S1/E8

1 Philip: Who is it you think you'd be letting down, anyway? A koala?
2 This whole thing is a circus.
3 It's a miserable circus.
4 Trudging from town to town and we're the dancing bears.
5 Elizabeth: What are you doing? [Philip takes a cigarette]
6 Philip: I'm taking back this small pleasure.
7 You've taken away too much.
8 Elizabeth: No! No, no! Those things will kill you!
9 Philip: Yeah.
10 Forty a day your father smoked and now I know why.
11 Poor bastard.
12 Yeah, he probably took one look at this tour and thought,
13 "D'you know what? I'd be better off with cancer."
14 Elizabeth: Shut up!
15 Philip: What is it you're trying to prove? What is it you want
16 to hear him say? "Bravo, Lilibet."
17 "Manage the whole tour."
18 "Lilibet never lets you down."
19 "Ticked every box."
20 "Never put a foot wrong."
21 "Now, finally, I love you more than I love Margaret."
22 Elizabeth: Get out! Get out!
23 Philip: Don't touch me.
24 Oh, Christ!
25 Elizabeth: Get out! - Philip! Don't you dare come back here!
26 Philip: Don't be ridiculous! Christ!

In *Extract 8*, Philip is comparing the royal roles and duties to a “circus” (line 2-3) and he is accusing Elizabeth to have taken away all his pleasures. Furthermore, Philip involves Elizabeth’s dead father (“Yeah, he probably took one look at this tour and thought, “D’you know what? I’d be better off with cancer.”, line 12-13) and a conflict between Elizabeth and Margaret in his insults. By miming Elizabeth’s and Margaret’s dead father (“Now, finally, I love you more than I love Margaret.”, line 21), he is mocking the sensitive situation between the two sisters.

Consequently, Elizabeth starts throwing objects at Philip and commands him to leave their house in an aggressive tone. While Philip tries to flee, she is following him and continues with her physical attack. In this case, Philip’s behaviour lacks respect and sensitivity, and he obviously tries to provoke an emotional reaction from Elizabeth. He succeeds, as can be seen from Elizabeth’s behaviour, and the conflict becomes very open and articulated; Elizabeth’s language is not as

controlled as her rather harsh and insulting tone displays (“Shut up!”, line 14).

However, a camera team that has been waiting outside their property has caught their fight on film, which leads to a sudden end of this outbreak. The shocked facial expressions of the camera team and the direct change of action of Elizabeth and Philip emphasise that this uncontrolled emotional outbreak is not acceptable for the aristocracy due to their public positions as role models.

The given scene can function as an example that conflicts in the aristocracy are not always treated with silence and that there are moments in which emotions cannot be controlled. This scene signifies the humanity of the royalty, as even for a social group that is conditioned to behave perfectly and civilised all the time, it is in some situations impossible to hold back emotions, especially if the accusations are too heavy.

On the contrary, the exception of *Shameless*, which is displayed in *Extract 9*, provides a scene with significant silence behaviour instead of an emotional outbreak, violence and insulting language. Preceding the given scene from episode 2, Frank has hit Ian and he is cleaning his bleeding nose in the kitchen.

Extract 9

Shameless: S1/E2

1 Frank: Okay. Okay, okay, okay.

In *Extract 9*, Fiona, who has witnessed the scenario, has followed Frank into the kitchen and is staring at him in silence while he is taking care of his injury. Her angry facial expression and crossed armed body language signal that she intends to communicate something to him, however, instead of taking up the turn with an insult to initiate the conversation, she punishes him with silence. Although Frank has noticed her presence and they have had eye contact, he continues to treat his injury without facing her or taking up the turn to indicate a conversation himself. However, as Fiona continues to stare at him in silence, Frank lastly looks at her and takes up the turn by saying “Okay.” (line 1). In this case, Fiona is omitting verbal communication altogether until Frank gives in, and silence is being used strategically (Oduro-Frimpong 2007: 297ff.)

This conflict behaviour represents a huge contrast to the general behaviour of fighting for words and physical violence, and the given silence strategy is very conspicuous and effective for the conflict, as Frank’s consent can be interpreted as a sign of defeat by her unusual silence behaviour. Furthermore, his reaction clarifies that silence makes him understand that his behaviour has been seriously bad this time and, therefore, silence can be interpreted as an effective technique to signal another participant’s extreme misbehaviour and the resulting distance between conversationalists

(Acheson 2009: 24). This exception is another proof of the diverse functionality of silence as a conflict strategy. Nevertheless, the main conflict behaviour of the working class represented in *Shameless* is marked by words and violence.

Altogether one can state that the contrary of the general turn-taking pattern is being used by the creators of each series as an effective method to signal a peak level of conflict. In both cases, the participants who are either being treated with silence or harsh words and physical violence, realise that their actions have gone too far.

5.5. Creators Choices in The Crown

Another cinematic feature in *The Crown* supports the hypothesis that the creators of the series have explicitly chosen silence as one main feature to represent the royalty and its conflict behaviour. In one scene, the topic of silence is explicitly addressed in one interaction between Elizabeth and Margaret. Elizabeth clarifies the importance of silence for the monarchy and the people (“I give them silence.”, line 1) and highlights its positive outcome for her reign, whereas Margaret wants to give the people “character and excitement” (line 3). As discussed above, Elizabeth’s character displays strong interdependent self-concepts, whereas Margaret’s character displays rather independent self-concepts, and her behaviour in conflict is direct and confronting at times. Elizabeth believes that the behaviour of her sister brings “instability and drama” (line 4), whereas silence brings stability and keeps the drama to a minimum. This is another proof of the creators choice of silence as an important language feature of the aristocracy and can be another explanation for the general pattern of members of the aristocracy to prefer avoiding conflict strategies.

Extract 10

The Crown: S1/E8

- 1 Margaret: I can't help it if they want to write about me.
- 2 Elizabeth: Well, it would help if you didn't give them what they crave.
- 3 Margaret: Character and excitement.
- 4 Elizabeth: Instability and drama.
- 5 Margaret: Well, at least I give them something.
- 6 You give them nothing.
- 7 Elizabeth: I give them silence.

6. Conclusion

This paper examined the conflict behaviour of the English-speaking aristocracy and working class, with a specific focus on the functions of silence, by analysing selected extracts of transcripts from

two TV-series. The comparison of the two social classes revealed different continuous conflict patterns during conversations and, moreover, various functions of occurring silence sequences could be identified. While the working class in *Shameless* makes use of a direct and confronting conflict strategy as their quick turn-taking and sharp verbal expression display, the aristocracy in *The Crown* prefers avoiding conflict management by using frequent instances of silence in their conflicts. In the aristocracy, silence is used to avoid further conflict or to remain polite and respectful, whereas the very rare instances of silence that are used in the working class, have a strategic function and aim to provoke a reaction from their counterpart or to enhance the conflict.

The differences in the application of silence and conflict strategies have been explained by analysing the self-construals and the emotional intelligence of the conversationalists. The analysed members of the aristocracy are part of a public family and display interdependent self-construals, as they have to consider the family construct and their social roles. Hence, silence is used to maintain relational harmony and stability. On the other hand, the analysed members of the working class display independent self-construals; they think of themselves and their own interests in conflicts, as can be seen from their direct and insulting behaviour.

While the strong emotional intelligence of the aristocracy makes them capable of maintaining their conversational decorum even in moments of dreadful tension and thus, prevents an escalation of the conflict, the lack of conversation discipline of the working class suggests a lack of emotional intelligence, and leads to an escalation of the conflict, as it often results in violence.

Although this study gave an insight into patterns of conflict discourse, the analysed exceptions prove that in extreme conflict situations, the opposite of the general conflict pattern of the two social classes can be used as an effective conflict strategy as well.

In general, the direct comparison between two social classes in specific contexts in one study was used to provide a clearer picture of the variety of forms of silence and to highlight the importance of considering the contextual framework in order to analyse and perceive silence correctly. This study is significant because it is the first to analyse silence in relation to social class, however, for future research, other variables, such as gender or specific cultural variables could be included in the analysis, rather than focusing on the general Western world.

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