

The construction of conflicting accounts in public participation TV

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ABSTRACT

Some of the recent work in the field of media discourse has been concerned with various levels in the organization and structure of audience participation programs on radio and television; other approaches to the analysis of talk in these settings have focused on the interactional frameworks at play in the talk. The aim of this article is to develop the interactional approach by looking at the production of narratives in a mediated context: specifically, the production of a story from two different, and conflicting, points of view. The stories I analyze occur within two different program genres (talk show and television court) where lay members of the public are often called upon to produce accounts of events which are then contested by another participant. This article discusses the significance of tense shifting in these second versions, from narrative past to conversational historic present, in the public construction of believable alternative stories. (Accounts, conversational historic present, conflict, discourse, interaction, television, narratives.)*

This article examines the occurrence of the conversational historic present (CHP) tense in the institutional context of media discourse – specifically, its use as an interactional resource in the talk of “lay” speakers in public participation television. The study arises from a continuing research interest in lay speaker participation in media discourse (Livingstone & Lunt 1994), particularly in speakers’ use of narratives in mediated contexts (Thornborrow 1997). In collecting recordings of a series of broadcasts involving different forms of audience participation (the transcripts are of naturally occurring talk from British and American talk shows, and from an American television court series), I began to notice that, when two participants were involved in telling their own version of the same story, there were significant differences between the ways in which the first and second stories got told. In second accounts, there seemed to be a fairly consistent shift occurring from past tense forms to the CHP in main event clauses. By contrast, the use of CHP in such clauses was practically absent from all first accounts. This recurring feature of second, conflicting accounts of previously told stories in the data warranted closer attention.

This analysis will explore two issues: first, the occurrence of CHP as a situated, interactional resource for telling conflicting stories; and second, the way that its use in this mediated context might be explained as a means of accomplishing a specific action – the construction of publicly accountable, alternative accounts.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The analysis in this article is broadly informed by interactional discourse analysis and by Goffman's notion (1981) of FOOTING and PARTICIPATION frameworks. It also draws on and develops previous work on the occurrence of CHP in narratives (Wolfson 1978, 1981, Schiffrin 1981, Johnstone 1987, Leith 1995). My aim is to examine the occurrence of this grammatical form as a discourse feature which contributes to a particular kind of action undertaken by speakers in the context of public participation TV: the situated production by co-present speakers of conflicting accounts of the same event, or sequence of events.

In Wolfson's account (1978) of tense alternation between the past and the CHP, she describes CHP as an interactional variable rather than a semantically marked verb form. As such, it is highly dependent on speaker–audience relationship, within a particular genre or speech event. While she acknowledges that CHP may function to structure experience from one speaker's point of view, and also to dramatize that experience, Wolfson maintains that it is the switch itself – from past tense forms to CHP, or vice versa, signaling a change from narration into PERFORMANCE – that is significant, rather than semantic content or value of actions narrated in either tense.

Wolfson also looked at the sociolinguistic variables of age, occupation, ethnicity, and status that might affect the likelihood of CHP's occurring in narrative speech events; in relation to these variables, she found that performance is likely to occur when speakers are sure that their stories will be understood and appreciated by their audience – i.e., when levels of similarity and empathy between participants are high. The degree of narrative performance can therefore be a discursive resource for constructing intimacy between speakers, since CHP is a variable that is sensitive to symmetrical social relations.

Schiffrin 1981, in a quantitative analysis of tense variation between past tense and CHP, argues that CHP is both (i) a stylistic device used by narrators to signal vividness and drama, and (ii) a discourse feature which organizes the narrative into chronological segments. In Schiffrin's analysis, the direction of the switch is significant, and she finds that the switch back to past tense forms from CHP serves the function of separating distinct narrative events (1981:56). She also claims that CHP is a grammatical resource which foregrounds the speaker's experience (1981:46) and, in doing so, acts as an internal evaluation device through which narrators can present events as if they were happening there and then, from their particular point of view.

Schiffrin's account of the evaluative function of CHP could also be characterized in interactional terms as enhancing the degree of speakers' commitment to what is being said – i.e. to their version of the story at hand. To use Goffman's notion of "footing," which describes the structural relationship between speakers and their utterances, CHP may well be a grammatical device on which speakers systematically draw so as to foreground the "principal" of their story. In other words, speakers may switch to CHP in order to mark their level of commitment to their story, and the extent to which they are "the party to whose position the words attest" (Goffman 1981:226). The specific nature of the participation framework in my data – where the different accounts are being produced for a co-present, overhearing audience – may also contribute to a second narrator's use of CHP as a discursive device which can function to construct a more believable version of a story, once a first version has been heard.

In an analysis of two separate tellings of the same folktale by the same speaker, Leith 1995 found (a) that CHP was the norm in a performed narrative; (b) that in his data it frequently marked the onset of a complicating action; and (c) that it was highly likely to occur in contexts where dialog was being recounted, "as if the 'now' of dramatic speech creates a sense of present action" (1995:60). He notes, like Wolfson, the highlighting effect of the switch to CHP through the event of the switch itself; and like Schiffrin, he identifies its organizing function in the telling of different event sequences. Leith also argues that the use of CHP depends to a great extent on the relationship between the teller and the audience: The greater the degree of solidarity between the two, the greater the frequency of CHP. However, he suggests that the use of CHP is most often a performance variable which is determined by genre and which, in many cases, functions as a generic marker for the production of short comic narratives, jokes, and in his data, folktales.

Finally, Johnstone 1987 analyzes verb tense alternation in a category of verbs she calls "dialog introducers," such as *say* and *go*, in stories involving the teller's encounter with some form of authority figure. She found that, in reported dialog, the talk of the non-authority (the teller) and of the authority figure was distinguished by a switch in tense from past to CHP, and that this switch was systematic; the story teller's talk was always introduced in the past tense, while the talk of the authority figure was introduced in CHP (1987:39). Johnstone argues that story tellers draw on the evaluative function of CHP to mark relative social status; but like Leith, she suggests that patterns of tense choice in oral narrative also depend on a range of factors in individual rhetorical contexts.

Taking up this point in order to develop an account of when and why speakers shift into CHP, we must pay closer attention to the contextual, situated use of this form as an interactional resource. I noticed that, in every case in my data where two conflicting versions of the same events were produced by participants, the second teller (however briefly) shifted from using past tense forms in main event clauses to using CHP. Hence I want to examine how this shift may be understood as a rhetorical form that is interactionally relevant to the situated context of the talk.

Levinson 1988, in his discussion of Goffman's ideas about the production format of utterances, notes that there are clear grammaticalized forms in many languages for displaying a speaker's level of personal commitment to what is being said, as well as for distinguishing the role of relayer or transmitter of a story from its informational source. These forms, Jakobson's "evidentials" (1971), can be realized in some languages by the modality of an utterance. Levinson mentions the case of one American Indian language (Hidatsa) where there are "systematic patterns in relation of first tellings to second tellings" (1988:185). In others, evidentials are realized through systems of contrastive suffixes indicating authorship, or through the use of aspect markers, e.g. in the telling of myths and historical tales (1988:186). It may well be that a speaker who is producing a second telling of the same story, from a different viewpoint, can also grammatically mark this telling through an evidential form which indicates "principalship" rather than "authorship." The use of CHP may turn out to be one such device, and one that is particularly sensitive to what Schegloff 1981 terms "interactional contingency." In the context of public participation TV, the use of CHP in second, conflicting accounts appears to be a linguistic resource on which speakers routinely draw in order to mark their account as different from the preceding speaker's.

DATA SOURCES

My data corpus is taken from TV broadcasts in Britain, from 1997 and 1998, which involve different kinds of public participation in talk shows and television "courts." The transcripts in this article are of talk from the following programs: *Esther* (BBC 1, August 1997); *Judge Judy* (Carlton, August 1997), and *Montel* (Channel 4, August 1997). First, extracts of these programs were transcribed where there was evidence of narrative sequences in the talk of lay participants. I then looked for instances where the same story, or account of events, was told by two different participants. To use Blum-Kulka's (1997) framework of "telling, tale, and teller," I was looking for sequences of talk where the tale was constant (i.e. the same events are being recounted), while the teller and the telling changed within the relatively short space of a sequence of TV time. The telling – the way the tale gets to be told by different tellers – is the object of analysis here. I found that, although the contexts for these tellings are rather different, the same phenomenon occurs in all of them.

In the TV courtroom, the setting is the equivalent of a small claims court where members of the public can be awarded claims of up to \$5,000. The host of this show, Judge Judy, is described in the opening voice-over as a "real judge," and plaintiffs and defendants are called up to the bench to put their cases to her. She then rules in favor of one or the other, and the judgments made are apparently legally binding. The talk shows – one British, hosted by Esther Rantzen, and one American, hosted by Montel Williams – consist respectively of discussions about jealousy, and about teenage girls who have been thrown out of their homes by

their parents. In each show, selected participants are foregrounded as having particular stories to tell in relation to the program's theme. These people are separated from the rest of the studio audience and occupy their own studio space, either facing the audience, in the case of Esther, or in the case of Montel, seated in a row next to the host, facing the TV cameras with their backs to the audience.

ANALYSIS

The context for this talk can be broadly characterized as institutional, mediated, and multi-party. For my purpose here, the relationships between speakers seem to be best accounted for in terms of Goffman's "ratified participation" frameworks, rather than according to more typical sociolinguistic categories of social status, gender, or ethnicity. It is the participant roles occupied by the speakers that determine what kinds of actions they undertake in the talk, rather than their relative social status. Indeed, social status seems largely irrelevant in these contexts; and this will pose a problem for the claim that, quantitatively speaking, the use of CHP is more likely when there is a high degree either of familiarity or of symmetrical social status among participants.¹ Speakers' relation to the audience is complex and multi-layered; although they may be familiar with one or two members of the audience (e.g. when members of the same family are present), the majority of participants are non-familiars, and there is a high degree of asymmetry between the role of lay participant and the hosts of these shows.

Why do these stories come about, and how are they comparable? The main feature that they share is that they provide a conflicting version of a previous participant's account of some sequence of events. The two narratives are either from opposing claimants in the TV courtroom, or from two audience members, usually from the same family. Both tellers have an experience of the same event: They were present when the events occurred, so they have a legitimate right to tell the story as it happened to them. Returning to Goffman's analysis of footing, they are AUTHOR, ANIMATOR, and PRINCIPAL; they also "figure" centrally in the story they tell (it's about them). In the TV courtroom data, the litigants represent themselves, and much of their evidence is given in the form of what Conley & O'Barr (1990:178) have called "litigant narratives." Philips (1990:197) has described the format of courtroom discourse as "typically . . . one in which each of two sides presents its view of relevant events, and then fact finders, a jury or a judge, choose which of the two versions of reality they consider to be most plausible."

So there is quite a lot at stake for these tellers: They have to convince a third party, the judge, that their version is the more plausible one. In the talk show data, there is perhaps less at stake (no money changes hands). But there is nevertheless an element of credibility involved, in that speakers are engaged in putting a second version of events across as convincingly as possible, to an audience who have already heard a first version.

What changes take place between first telling and second telling? In other words, which linguistic and discursive resources do participants use to differentiate their second telling from the first telling?² I begin by looking at an instance of a switch to CHP in a non-mediated, ordinary conversational context. In a study of the way stories get retold in naturally occurring conversation, Norrick 1998 has analyzed the way speakers embed the same story into different contexts for different audiences – focusing on the ways in which a story may differ, and in which it remains constant on separate occasions. In collaborative retellings of a familiar story, he found that speakers both contest and confirm other speakers' versions of events; but he never really examines how these contestations are accomplished by participants. In an earlier article, Norrick 1997 examines the function of collaborative retelling of familiar stories in terms of ratifying group membership and reinforcing group values; but again, he does not address the issue of when conflicting accounts occur, or of how they are dealt with by speakers.

The first data extract below, taken from Norrick 1997, provides some evidence that, in the production of a second, conflicting version of a preceding story, speakers are likely to use CHP. This particular extract is used by Norrick to illustrate shifting group dynamics between different family members, as each participant attempts to contribute to the story. However, I found it interesting because it contains a sequentially produced first and second account of the same event by two different speakers.

- (1) "Poodle"//Norrick 1997. Participants: Annie & Lynn (sisters), Jean (their cousin), Helen (Annie & Lynn's mother)
1. Lynn: Remember [when–]
 2. Jean: [it was] terrible
 3. Lynn: Jennifer, the first time Jennifer had a perm
 4. when she came home. It was the funniest thing.
 5. Jean: She put something on her head, a bag or something?
 6. Lynn: She wore her–
 7. Annie: huh huh huh
 8. Lynn: Well she wore her–
 9. Helen: "Hair ball, hair ball" Yeah. Because she–
 10. Annie: She just always had this hood on. And she ran
 11. right upstairs,
 12. Lynn: → No. First she threw her bag up the stairs, almost
 13. hit me.
 14. Annie: Oh yeah
 15. Lynn: → Then "bang." The door slams. And I'm like– I was
 16. on the phone. I was like "Ah I don't know. My sister
 17. has just walked in. I think something's wrong."
 18. [then she ran up the stairs.]
 19. Annie: [oh that's it.]"I look like a damn poodle."
 20. {general laughter}
 21. Lynn: Like sobbing. "I look like a poodle."

Here Lynn (the younger sister) attempts to introduce a story about another sister, Jennifer. In 1:1, *Remember* is actually Lynn's second attempt to introduce this story; she has trouble establishing her role as story "teller," since the story is a

familiar one which is known to all the participants. Jean (1:5), Helen (1:9) and Annie (1:10) all contribute to the telling, but at 1:12, Lynn explicitly contests Annie's account of Jennifer's actions: *No. First she threw her bag up the stairs, almost hit me.* Annie's *Oh yeah* (1:14) indicates her alignment with Lynn's version of events, and Lynn continues with a much more "performed" account of the story: *Then bang. The door slams. And I'm like— I was on the phone.*

It is here (1:15) that the switch to CHP occurs, once Lynn has gained the floor as principal teller. The switch is momentary, lasting through only two verb phrases; but according to Norrick's transcript, it clearly does occur. Following Wolfson, this occurrence could be accounted for as the speaker's switching into performance; and it is appropriate and predictable in this context because of the symmetrical relationship in play between the teller and her audience as members of the same family group, when the speaker is confident that her story will be understood and appreciated by the other participants. Following Schiffrin, the switch would have an evaluative function as well as a stylistic, dramatizing effect; the speaker is foregrounding her own experience of the recounted events. I suggest that there is also an element of believability at stake here. The use of CHP at this point in the talk is a significant interactional resource for Lynn, in order to establish her story as the accurate version – and it also functions as a rebuttal since it is produced immediately after Annie's first account, the accuracy of which Lynn has contested. Furthermore, the shift to CHP in Lynn's version occurs in main event clauses, not just in the dialog-introducing clauses identified by Johnstone.

Turning now to data from a talk show, we find that the host (Esther Rantzen) has just summarized a problem experienced by Maria and Tony. She addresses Maria (2:1), who produces an account of a particular incident as evidence for her claim that *he's got worse* (2:2). A general claim about not being able to go out is followed (2:9) by a story of one particular occasion when her husband's jealousy caused problems for the whole family.

- (2) "The Party"//1//Esther 8/97
1. Est: do you– has he changed over the years
 2. Mar: yeah he's got worse (.) actually
 3. Aud: ((laughter))
 4. Est: [in what way]=
 5. Aud: [((laughter))]
 6. Kel: =((screechy laugh))
 7. Mar: well we can't go (down)the pub (1.0) like we could never go to a night club (.) could never go in a pub
 9. → (.hh) like we went to a party (.) and there was a bit
 10. of an incident (.hh) like Kelly (.)that's my daughter
 11. in the blonde hair (1.0)(.hh) a young chap(1.0) had
 12. fancied her n'asked for her telephone number (1.0)
 13. (.hh) n'it caused a bit of an argument over it Tony
 14. thought (.) that I was taking the young chap's
 15. telephone number (1.0) so it was quite embarrassing
 16. (.) n'we had to leave the party (.hh) (1.0) we didn't
 17. have a row at– we had a f-few disagreements at the
 18. party (.hh) but when we had come out (1.0)I was in

19. tears n'Kelly was in tears (.) it caused so much
20. disruptions at the party (1.0) that we had to
21. leave=
22. Est: =was this a bit up[setting] for you
23. Kel: [(((clears throat)))]
24. Est: Kelly too
25. Kel: [yes] [yes] it was
26. Mar: [n'Kelly] missed out on the boy [friend]

The story shows the classic structure of a Labovian oral narrative, with an abstract (*we went to a party n'there was a bit of an incident*, (2:9), orientation sequences, a series of complicating actions and a resolution (*we had to leave the party*), some evaluation clauses (*it was quite embarrassing* and *it caused so much disruptions at the party*), and a coda (*Kelly missed out on the boyfriend*). It is told, however, entirely in the past tense, with no switch to CHP.

This is also the first account of a sequence of events, and it is contested a few moments later in a second account by Tony in ex. 3. The host turns to him (3:1) and asks him not for his version of the story, although that is what he ultimately produces; instead, she poses another question relating directly to the effects of his actions.

(3) "The Party"//2//Esther 8/97

1. Est: do you think this is making (2.0) everyone's lives
2. a bit miserable (.) Tony
3. (2.0)
4. Ton: yeah they say th'it does (1.0) makes my life miserable
5. as well really (.hh) but like (.) other things th-
6. at the party it was a different (.) situation there we
7. was all just (.) sitting having a drink n'I was I was
8. told why don't you go (.) to the bar (.) an'the
9. → minute I was at the bar n'I looked round she's talking
10. to someone else an'straight away (.hh) the old
11. jealousy comes in an' gets you n'I think what's going
12. on then she come up and said get a pen get a pen (.hh)
13. I gotta give that fella the number
14. [n'I'm like what? it's not for me] it's for Kelly (.)
15. Aud: [(((laughter-----)))]
16. Ton: so I went hold on n'I'm s- [march across the dance
17. Mar: [(((laughs-----
18. Ton: floor don'I]
19. Mar: -----]--->))
20. Ton: an'Kelly's behind goin' no no no not me not me so
21. straight away I'm thinking (.) [well what's] going on
22. (Kel) [(((laughs)))]
23. → (.hh) an'I (.) lose my temper from there on in
24. Est: so it wrecked the party from your point of view and
25. indeed from your family's point of view
26. Ton: yeah
27. Est: is it wrecking your life all this (.) suspicion
28. suspicion suspicion

Tony begins his account of events at the party with an embedded preface (3:6): *at the party it was a different situation*. In so doing he sets up his story as different,

as an account which is going to conflict with Maria's. We now know not only that a story is coming up, but also that it will take issue with the events as they have been described by the preceding teller. At 3:9 the first switch into CHP occurs; and until the resolution (for Tony) in 3:23 (*so I lose my temper from there on in*), the majority of the narrative is told using CHP. Here not only the dialog is produced in CHP, but also most of the main event clauses:

she's talking to someone else
 the old jealousy comes in an gets you
 I think what's going on
 get a pen get a pen
 n'I'm like what
 it's not for me it's for Kelly
 I'm s- march across the dance floor don'I
 n' Kelly's behind going no no
 straight away I'm thinking
 what's going on
 I lose my temper

If we are to take the switch into CHP as an indication of level of narrative performance through the stylistic dramatization created by these present tense forms – not just in the dialog sequences, but in most of the main events in the story – then this second account is clearly “performed” to a much greater extent than the first. (I have taken *come* in 3:12, *then she come up and said*, to be a non-standard past tense form). What is interesting about this story, though, is that the occurrence of CHP here runs counter to both Wolfson and Schiffrin's claims. They propose that the switch into CHP can be seen as “an index of proffered commonality” (Wolfson 1978:236) and is therefore likely to occur when the speaker is of equal status and sure of the empathetic stance of the audience toward the story. But in ex. 3, the speaker is addressing a studio audience which for the most part is unfamiliar to him, and a host whose status as a media celebrity and controller of the show should be producing a relationship of social distance rather than familiarity. Nor does the switch function as an indicator of a generic shift into a different kind of discourse, e.g. a joke or funny anecdote, as Leith points out may sometimes be the case (1995:68). The story is nonetheless a performance in the sense that it is publicly produced from a front-stage position, on camera, to a studio audience. Why should this second, conflicting account contain a high-level use of CHP, when the first account does not? The answer to this question is possibly more likely to be found in this story's sequential position in relation to the preceding one – and in what the speaker is accomplishing by producing it – than in a simple switch into performance in relation to sociolinguistic variables of intimacy and symmetrical status.

To explore this idea further, we can turn to extracts 4 and 5 from the TV court series, *Judge Judy*. Here, because of the nature of the courtroom setting, the discourse is predictably more adversarial; the judge questions claimants and invites them to put their cases, essentially through providing their accounts of events.

It is thus a discourse setting where conflicting accounts of the same sequence of events are highly likely to occur. However, unlike other forms of courtroom discourse (cf. Harris 1984, Philips 1990, Drew 1992), where the story is elicited principally through a highly preallocated system of turn-taking through counsel questioning, the participants in the TV courtroom answer directly to the judge. There is thus a much greater variation in participant interaction in evidence here: not just question/answer turns, but also disputes, opinions, and some degree of interaction between plaintiff and defendant.

The case I examine here concerns two roommates who are in dispute about a deposit on the lease of an apartment. In the transcribed sequence, the judge has called on Jennifer (the plaintiff) and Shannon (the defendant) to give an account of what was said in a telephone conversation between the two women, on the night that Jennifer was told to leave the apartment. Shannon goes first and tells her story of events (4:5–17). In her account, she uses CHP in quotation of direct speech as dialog, e.g. *I suggest you don't come home this evening* (4:5), and in a reporting verb, e.g. *'she goes'* (4:12). However, Schiffirin found in her data that the report of spoken interaction is the most frequent and likely context where CHP occurs, and that the use of *go* in particular is limited to prefacing only direct quotes in the present tense (1982:68). Occurrences of CHP in this type of clause can be seen at the arrowed lines below:

- (4) "The Phone Call"/1//Judge Judy 18-08-97
1. Jud: let me– would you (.) tell me again (.) what you told
 2. her in that phone conversation [you had]
 3. Sha: [(s'I recall)]
 4. Jud: an argument
 5. Sha: → as I re(collect xxx)she said I suggest you don't
 6. come home this evening (.) I'd a friend that was
 7. → there from ((–)) I said well I suggest (.) you go to
 8. Cindy's house the– the other girl who was at her
 9. apartment (.) uh our apartment (.h) had answered the
 10. phone when this whole verbal (.) dispute started (.hh)
 11. → and erm (1.0) after (.) I said well I go I suggest you
 12. → go to Cindy's (.) and she goes well you know (.) I– I
 13. → don't know if she said I'll call the police or what
 14. → happened and I said well (.) no I'll call the police
 15. myself and if they come (.) if it comes down to it (.)
 16. I have a copy of the lease (.) so what

The dialog sequences are produced in CHP here; but in every other event clause (apart from *goes* in 4:12), Shannon uses the past tense forms *told* and *said* to frame her report of the conversation between her and Jennifer. However, in Jennifer's account of the same telephone conversation, we find a pattern similar to Tony's use of CHP in ex. 3. Here is how Jennifer tells her story – marked, as Tony's was, with a preface signaling an upcoming contesting version of events (5:2).

- (5) "The Phone Call"/2//Judge Judy 18-08-97
1. Jud: so then you moved out
 2. Jen: yeah but that's not what I recall happening (.) what
 3. happened was that my friend Cindy came over she was
 4. staying over that night because (.) I was afraid to
 5. stay (.) alone in this apartment with her (.hh)
 6. and=
 7. Sha: =I wasn't even home that evening n'you [and]she's
 8. Jen: [right]
 9. Sha: she's=
 10. Jen: =I came home she wasn't home (.h)(.)[and she
 11. Jud: [so your
 12. Jen: called]
 13. Jud: friend Cindy] was staying in the apartment
 14. Jen: right (.) she was just there visiting (.) and she
 15. → calls (.) call me (.) every nasty name you could imagine
 16. → accusing me of playing her messages (.) which I had
 17. [no idea what she was talking about] yes=
 18. Jud: [this was on the phone conversation] =this was the
 19. phone conver[sation]
 20. Jen: [and so](.) she was just screaming at me
 21. → calling me terrible things she [hangs up]the phone
 22. Sha: [(I don' re-)]
 23. Jen: → calls back I let the machine get it because I (.)
 24. wasn't gonna talk to her under (.) y'know with her
 25. talking like that (.hh) and (.) she left a message
 26. saying (.) you better move out (.) or I'm having you
 27. arrested (.) you don't have a copy of the lease (.hh)
 28. [a few minutes] later-
 29. Sha: [(what difference)] what difference does it
 30. matter if you have a copy of the lease or not (1.0)
 31. what difference does it make (.) can you=
 32. Jud: =ok=
 33. Sha: =is that
 34. [is that it]
 35. Jud: [so you believed] so you moved out
 36. Jen: → right (.) a few minutes later the police arrive they
 37. → get a call from Manhattan Beach (.) that there was a
 38. burglary (.) in=
 39. Jud: =so the police arrived=
 40. Jen: =(that one))yes
 41. (.) and they heard her message (.)and [that's wh-]
 42. Jud: [you're not]
 43. going to tell me about the pol- y'listen to me (.) you
 44. can't tell me what the police heard (.)[but] the
 45. Jen: [right]
 46. Jud: police did arrive
 47. Jen: yep they did
 48. Jud: did you move out that night
 49. Jen: yes [(that evening)]
 50. Jud: [what are you] suing her for
 51. Jen: I'm suing her because I (.) feel I'm entitled to my
 52. deposit back [—]

In this second account of the events that night, it is not just the dialog sequences that are reported in CHP, but significantly, also some of the main event clauses in the narrative:

she calls me every nasty name you could imagine
 accusing me of playing her messages
 she hangs up the phone
 calls back
 I let the machine get it (this could be either past or CHP)
 the police arrive
 they get a call

The degree of performance in this account is consequently much greater than that in the first account, where the story is constructed basically as a report of a conversation. CHP forms are limited to the representation of dialog in the first account, and all the reporting clauses in which Shannon recounts the main events occur in the past tense:

I told her
 she said
 I said
 the other girl had answered the phone
 I don't know if she said ... what happened
 I said well

Here we can see the same phenomenon recurring in a different TV context, but one where the speakers are engaged in doing the same kind of discursive work: producing a second version of events that have already been recounted by a first teller. Crucially, the second tellers are producing accounts which conflict with the first tellers' version; and in both data extracts discussed here so far, their accounts contain significant use of CHP, producing a level of performance which is absent from the first accounts.

Another sequence from the TV courtroom data shows the same pattern even more clearly, when three separate accounts are given of the same events. This case involves a dispute over repairs to a car which led to a fight between two men, Nathan and Dave. The first story of the fight is told by Nathan, the plaintiff:

- (6) "The Fight"//1//Judge Judy 14-8-97
1. Jud: let's hear it now let's hear about the violence (2.0)
 2. 'cos that's what your suing [for right]
 3. Nat: [the first] violence
 4. occurred like I say was on Wednesday in his drive where
 5. he grabbed me by the throat and threatened that I could
 6. not back out of this deal that we're too far in to it
 7. and would cause me traumatic injury if I (.) insisted
 8. (.) he had me by the throat and ripped my shirt off
 9. n' punched me in the guts three times=
 10. Jud: =did you do that
 11. sir
 12. (1.0)

13. Nat: his father [was]
 14. Jud: [ju-] u- did you do that
 15. Dav: oh no Ma'am

In this first account, there is no use of CHP. As we have seen in other first tellings so far, the main event clauses are all past tense clauses:

he grabbed me
 threatened that I could not back out
 he had me by the throat
 ripped my shirt off
 punched me in the guts

Next in the sequence is an account given by an eyewitness to the fight; although it is told from a different perspective, his version of events is similar to the first one, insofar as it is produced in support of the first teller's version.

- (7) "The Fight"//2//Judge Judy 14-8-97
1. Jud: ok could you just take your hands out of your
 2. pockets [you're not] afraid of that right=
 3. Wit: [yes ma'am] =no ma'am
 4. Jud: alright (.) did you witness anything physical on that
 5. date between these two [people]
 6. Wit: [yes I] did
 7. Jud: tell me exactly what you [saw]
 8. Wit: [well] I was sitting
 9. in the car as they were doing their conversation
 10. (.) Dave ended up taking a swing at Richard (1.0)
 11. and hit him in the side
 12. Jud: Richard is this (.) person who (.) who was al- who I
 13. call Nathan 'cos that's [what's]in it=
 14. Wit: [yes] =yes [Nathan]
 15. Jud: [ok]
 16. Wit: Richard didn't do nothing (.) Dave got irritable (.)
 17. grabbed him by the neck (.) threw him up against a
 18. door in a wall(1.0) then threw him to the ground (.) and
 19. → then started hittin' to him (.hh) I jump over (1.0)
 20. opened up the door (.) said Nancy please call the
 21. police (.) I jumped on Dave's neck (1.0) and as I did
 22. that (.) he got off Richard (.) Nathan (.) and then we
 23. both rushed into the house
 24. (1.0)
 25. Jud: ok (.) would you have a seat thank you

The narrative action clauses through which the witness recounts the key moments in the development of the fight as he saw it – from the opening orientation (7:8), *well I was sitting in the car*, through the complicating action clauses of the fight, and up to the resolution (7:23), *then we both rushed into the house* – are all in the past tense. The account does contain one occurrence of CHP, *I jump over* (7:19), and the witness's tense switch at this point seems to correspond to Schiffrin's finding that CHP occurs when a new episode in the story is being introduced. In effect, the clause *I jump in* marks the moment in the story when the current speaker

becomes involved in the action. After that, he switches back to using past tense forms to finish his story.

However, when the defendant, Dave, is subsequently called to give HIS account of the fight, he uses CHP from the very beginning of his story, and he continues to use it throughout the sequence. This is the third time the story has been told; and in this account, the only occurrence of a past tense form is when he uses the reporting verb *said*.

- (8) "The Fight"//3//Judge Judy 14-8-97
1. Jud: OK
 2. Dav: I walk out (1.0) I'm very aggressive (.) I'm yelling
 3. (.) I'm cussin' at him (.) everything (1.0) I'm
 4. saying I want my car back (.) I'm saying I don't
 5. wanna deal with you any more (1.0) I'm not fixing the
 6. car you're not keeping my car you gotta get outa my
 7. life (.) all deals are off (.hh) he then looks at me
 8. (.) an he says well (.) that ain't gonna happen (.) I
 9. say (.) a little while ago you told me you're gonna
 10. bring my car back I'm at my house waiting for two
 11. hours I call you four times (.) you're hanging up on
 12. me (.) what's the deal you change your mind again I
 13. want my car back (.hh) I physically get in front of
 14. him before he go— goes in his house (1.0) I'm like
 15. this both hands up (.) Nathan (.) stop this (.) you
 16. don't wanna do this (.) so (.) next you know he
 17. physically grabs me (.) goes to push me out of the way
 18. (1.0) Nathan (1.0) he's pushin' [me]
 19. Jud: [ssh] he's pushin' you
 20. Dav: yeah (.) yeah he's not fighting with me (.) he's not
 21. striking me (.) he's pushin' me outa the way (.)
 22. he's just trying to get in his door
 23. ?? (cool?)
 24. Dav: I grab onto him problem is is his porch is slippery
 25. (1.0) I'm falling down he's pushin' me outa the way
 26. (.) I pull him around (.) spin him around (.) put him
 27. on ground I got my arm on his neck (1.0) an' I'm
 28. holding him
 29. Jud: somebody said to me (.) somebody that I was
 30. having a verbal dispute with
 31. Dav: alright [—]

In Dave's version of the fight with Nathan, the use of CHP contributes to the highly performed character of this story, in contrast to the two accounts that have just preceded it. In both previous accounts, it was Dave who allegedly started the fight; but in Dave's account, he claims (8:17) that it was Nathan who *physically grabs* him, thus putting him in a position of having to defend himself. Dave's use of CHP in this sequence seems to function on various levels: first, as a stylistic device to dramatize performance; second, as Schiffrin's "internal evaluation device," reproducing the fight as he experienced it from his perspective; and third, as an indicator of his level of commitment to this version of events, which foregrounds the principalship of his story. I suggest that its occurrence in this particular context, in an account which conflicts with the two preceding versions, is

also significant in that it contributes to the third speaker's public bid for greater believability over the first two speakers' version of events. One way that speakers may accomplish this is by increasing the degree of the story's "performedness," and Dave indeed does this to a marked degree in his telling of a story that has been previously told not just once, but twice.

In all the data discussed so far, the participant role of second (or in the last case, third) teller in these media contexts contains a further dimension which was lacking in the non-mediated example of ex. 1: a dimension of having already figured in a first teller's version. Consequently, Tony, Jennifer, and Dave are all in a position of having to produce an account which somehow will enable them to redress the situation in such a way that they will figure more favorably. In other words, they have to account for their actions to an audience which has already heard what they have done in a first teller's version. Schiffrin has claimed that, in the context of argument, "stories can be used to support a speaker's claim . . . because they lead the listener towards a sympathetic alignment with the position being argued" (1990:253). We are not dealing with argument as such here, but the issue of alignment seems relevant to the position of speakers involved in producing second, conflicting accounts of first stories. Since the story has already been heard by the studio audience and the courtroom participants, the problem facing the second tellers is to find a way of producing the same story again, but in a version which aligns the audience sympathetically with their position rather than with the position of the first teller. I suggest that the shift into CHP is a discursive resource available to producers of these second stories; it enables them to foreground their level of commitment to their story through a performed present version of past events as they experienced them – their principalship. It also enables them to produce a story where their actions are presented to an audience as justifiable and accountable. Both these actions seem crucial in sympathetically aligning the story recipients (judge, host, studio audience) to the second teller's position, and in producing a version of a story which functions as a rebuttal of the previous speaker's version.

In the extracts discussed so far, all the accounts have been produced by speakers within a relatively short interval, in terms of TV time. Tony's version of "The party" comes straight after Marie's; Jennifer's version of "The phone call" immediately follows Shannon's; and Dave is asked for his version of "The fight" immediately after Nathan and his witness have given their accounts of what they saw. In the next extract, taken from the Montel Williams Show, two versions of a story appear with a much greater interval. Montel is considering the case of three teenage girls who have been thrown out of home by their parents. He invites the girls to tell their stories in the first part of the show; then, after the break, he invites their parents to respond to their children in the second part. The second version of the story below, even after editing, occurs at a much later stage in the proceedings than the first version. Nevertheless, the second teller still briefly switches into CHP, while the first teller does not use it at all. Here is the first

account, produced by Angel with some intervention from Montel, of what happened while her parents were away one weekend:

- (9) "The Break-In"//1//Montel Williams 8-97.
- 1 MW: What did your mother do to you
 2 Ang: .hhh well (.) she kicked me outa the house
 3 because she took away my keys (.) n'so I had
 4 to break in to get clothes out of my house (.)
 5 while they were out of town .hhh=
 6 MW: =while your Mom
 7 and Dad were outa town (.) you broke in to their
 8 house
 9 Ang: [huh – wu– xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx]
 10 MW: [and to get some things and you said well]
 11 so now I (already) broke up may as well have a
 12 coupla friends over
 13 Aud: ((laughter))
 14 MW: so the friends came over had a little party (s)
 15 Ang: (w)ell no (.) three friends I wou[ldn't call that]=
 16 MW: [three friends]
 17 Ang: =a party but
 18 MW: little beer=
 19 Ang: =they they acted like it was a party
 20 y[eah]
 21 MW: [little beer]
 22 Ang: a little beer [yeah]
 23 MW: [little] pizza
 24 Ang: little pizza [yeah]
 25 MW: [what] else did you do
 26 Ang: erm nothin' we just watched movies (.) stayed there
 27 for a little while (.) pizza man came an' (.)
 28 went n' (.) snitched on us for not paying him
 29 (.) a dollar that we owed him .hhhh [and–
 30 MW: [then they called
 31 back up and told your mother that
 32 Ang: yeah (.) and she freaked out about it like always
 33 (.)'cos (.) s'just how she is I guess she's a little
 34 church lady
 35 Aud: ((xxxx))
 36 MW: and she pitched you outa the house
 37 Ang: yeah

Angel's story is to a large extent co-narrated by Montel, who supplies some of the orientation and evaluation. The main events are told by Angel: Her parents had taken away her key, so she broke into the house to get some things (9:2–5); she watched movies with friends, ordered a pizza, and underpaid by a dollar (9:26–29); and finally, her mother found out and *freaked out* (9:32–34). However, she is not given the discursive space to produce her own story in her own words.³ Montel even produces the coda (9:36): *and she pitched you outa the house*. Angel does produce some evaluative elements, e.g. *three friends I wouldn't call that a party* (9:15), *they acted like it was a party* (9:19), *s'just how she is I guess she's a little church lady* (9:33–34); but she does not switch to CHP at any point in her account of the events which led to her being thrown out of home. Later on in the program,

however, her parents give their side of the story (without any intervention on the part of Montel). This is her mother, Karen's, account of what happened:

- (10) "The Break-In"//2//Montel Williams 8-97
- 1 MW: okay but now we're at the point where where (.)
 2 she's been thrown out why
 3 Kar: .hhh erm (.) it's been an ongoing problem for
 4 the last few months (.) we've had occasion to
 5 leave our home (.) and when we leave (.) I don't
 6 feel (.) at sixteen seventeen that she should be
 7 left on her own because I know she likes to party
 8 'n those are things I don't want done in my house
 9 .hh an'so we always tell her to find a place
 10 she has friends whose parents welcome her to their
 11 home (.) and this last weekend when this happened
 12 (.) she packed her suitcase (.) I asked her do you
 13 have everything you need (.) yes I said I don't want
 14 you to come into the house we're locking it (.) stay
 15 at your friend's house (.) I won't come in (.) we come
 16 → home from the weekend (.) she's been in the house
 17 erm (.) had broken into the house broken a lock
 18 between our garage and the kitchen to get into the
 19 house (.) er my sister had come in to check on er (.)
 20 the animals had found beer in the refrigerator
 21 n'this type of thing (.) erm (.) a message on the
 22 recorder from the pizza delivery place that they
 23 had been— there had been a problem (.) I called there
 24 (.) ah the pizza kid had been shorted money
 25 he said that somebody in the house had kind'v (.)
 26 bullied him (.) er that was his story erm (.) an'
 27 we have asked her and asked her not to do this (.)
 28 an'it was like it was the final straw what do you
 29 do (.) we've talked to her we've we have gone to some
 30 counseling I have asked her to go to counseling so
 31 we can try to resolve our problems (.) she doesn't
 32 want to because she doesn't think she has a problem
 33 MW: you're shaking your head no (.) why

In her account of the weekend's events, Karen uses CHP, predictably, in those sections of the story where she is reporting dialog between herself and her daughter (10:13–15). Then, in 10:15, she shifts into CHP at a key point in the narrative: *we come home from the weekend* which marks the transition between the parents' absence and their return. She continues with one more narrative clause in the present perfect, *she's been in the house*, before switching back into a past verb form *had broken into the house* (10:17). This sequence within Karen's narrative, although brief, again is evidence of a second teller's use of CHP in an alternative, conflicting version of a previously produced, first teller's account.

CONCLUSION

So far, I have discussed the use of CHP as a consistent and recurring feature in second tellings of stories within the mediated context of public participation TV. I have argued that it occurs particularly where speakers are producing a story for

an audience (and in the TV courtroom data, also for a judge); they are presenting it not just as an alternative version of previously recounted events, but as a version in which their actions are made accountable to the audience. I suggest that CHP is a linguistic resource which can enable speakers to realize levels of principalship and of performedness in these second tellings, which contribute to producing this accountability – and consequently to causing a potential realignment of the audience to the second speaker’s version of events and a rebuttal of the first version. Before concluding this analysis, I will turn to two more data extracts, one of which contains an example of conflicting accounts which are realized in a non-narrative format; the other contains a single story with no conflicting version. In neither of these sequences do the participants use CHP, which in my data seems to be a characteristic feature of second, conflicting accounts.

In the following extract, the participants (two male partners) have been talking to Esther Rantzen about the jealousy in their relationship which had led to one of them making a suicide attempt. This is how the first man describes his feelings:

(11) “Suicide”//Esther 8-97

1. Man1: erm (1.0) I wanted to kill the other person (.)
2. I really started to fantasize about killing the
3. other person (.hh) I wanted to wreck his career
4. (.hh) erm (.) I wanted to kill my partner (.) I
5. wanted to kill myself (.) a:nd (.) I started
6. making some suicide bids (.) I I grabbed a knife
7. and tried to slash my wrists in the kitchen=
8. Man2: = ((mmm))
9. Est: did you know him then
10. Man2: yeah (.) this was in my kitchen

Here the man is directing his talk at the studio audience, who are the primary recipients of the story through the mediation of Esther Rantzen. However, a shift in the participation framework of the talk occurs as the sequence progresses, when the second man produces further evidence of his former partner’s jealous behavior during a trip to Brighton (line 7):

(12) “Brighton”//Esther 8-97

1. Est: so it’s the [ultimate revenge]
2. Man1: [and it’s going to] trash his life
3. Est: yeah
4. Man1: it’s the ultimate revenge
5. Est: but you didn’t do these things
6. Man1: no=
7. Man2: → =no but he done done other things (.) like (.)
8. with my other partner (.) erm (.) he would then
9. follow us (.) down to Brighton (.) to see where
10. [we were going to see what we were doing]
11. Man1: → [I didn’t follow you we] we ended
12. up in the same town I did not follow you=
13. Man2: =but your
14. car was behind us almost all the way=
15. Aud: =((laughter))

This story is contested by the first man, but not in the form of a second account. In this instance, the conflicting point of view is realized by a direct denial of the preceding version of events (lines 11 and 12 in the transcript below), and more significantly, it is realized within a dispute sequence between the two speakers, who are directly addressing each other rather than the studio audience. The interaction between the two men becomes argumentative, with interruption and overlapping talk (lines 10–11), and with M1 repeating part of his overlapped utterance *I did not follow you*. At lines 13–14, M2 makes a counter-claim – *but your car was behind us almost all the way* – which provokes a response of laughter from the audience. Clearly, the first man’s claim that he had just *ended up in the same town* was not a sustainably believable one at this point. So the participation framework here differs from that of the earlier part of the story in two respects. First, instead of referring to each other in the third person, as in ex. 11, they use second person pronouns as they begin to address each other directly (lines 11–14). Second, the talk shifts from the narrative mode of the suicide attempt story to a confrontational dispute between the two men concerned. Although they remain ratified participants in the speech event, in ex. 12 the studio audience is no longer being directly addressed as the primary recipient of a story as it is in ex. 11. The main point here, then, is that CHP seems to be used most typically in this context when a particular configuration of participancy holds: i.e. in the construction of second, conflicting accounts which are addressed to a third party (or parties, in the case of the wider studio audience).

There are many single-version stories told by one teller in my data from these shows which do not contain any instances of CHP. One example, again from “Esther,” is the following extract where a participant is giving an account of his jealous reactions when out shopping with his girlfriend. He uses present tense forms in his story, not to recount a specific event, but to recount a typical scenario that occurs whenever they go shopping together (lines 11–14):

(13) “Tesco’s”//Esther 8-97

- | | | | |
|-----|------|--|-----------------|
| 1. | Est: | so it’s insecurity is that right Simon= | |
| 2. | Sim: | | =my biggest |
| 3. | | worry (.) in the whole world I think is | |
| 4. | | losing her (.) I mean (.) we used to go to | |
| 5. | | Tesco’s (.) all the time to do our shopping like | |
| 6. | | everybody else (.) but now we have to go sort | |
| 7. | | of just before closing time | |
| 8. | | [because] there’s so much hassle= | |
| 9. | Est: | [(so)] | |
| 10. | Mar: | | =((laughs)) |
| 11. | Sim: | → like y’go I go to the (.) pick some strawberries and | |
| 12. | | I turn around an’ there’s s– couple of blokes sort of | |
| 13. | | going (()) and I s– suddenly I just wanta (1.0) | |
| 14. | | ram my trolley into them or= | |
| 15. | Aud: | | =[((laughter))] |
| 16. | (?): | | =[((xxxxxxx))] |
| 17. | Sim: | or I make I make eye contact and (1.0) | |
| 18. | (?) | | ((xxxxx)) |

19. Sim: I try to (.) I mean I (.) I haven't yet (1.0)
 20. done anything physical but I have been=
 21. Est: =so these
 22. aren't people talking to [Amanda these]are people
 23. Sim: [no not at all]
 24. Est: just looking at [her]
 25. Sim: [just] looking
 26. Est: over the strawberries=
 27. Sim: =just(.) or over
 28. anything=[(xxxxxx)]
 29. Aud: =[(laughs)]
 30. Est: washing powder or anything [and you] cannot bear it
 31. Sim: [anything]
 32. Est: now [—]

So in the context of these shows, when there is only one version of a story, as in this last example, or when the conflicting version is produced within a different participatory framework, as in ex. 12 above, participants (in my data at least) do not appear to draw on CHP as a discursive resource to construct their narratives.⁴

To conclude, I have analyzed the use of CHP in the context of media narratives, particularly its use by second tellers in versions of events which conflict with previously told stories. I have found instances of speaker shifts into CHP which correspond to both Wolfson and Schiffrin's models of CHP occurrence; but I have argued, in support of Leith's point, that we must focus on the situated, rhetorical function of CHP if we are to determine why speakers use it in specific contexts. In the discursive framework of TV courtroom and talk show – where participants are engaged in producing personal experience narratives in which they have to present their actions to third parties as both believable and accountable, and particularly where these actions have already been presented by a previous participant from a different, often negative, perspective – the use of CHP is a particularly salient feature of their talk. Although not limited to these second, conflicting accounts, CHP is a recurring discursive device routinely used by participants in the data. It enables second tellers to mark their commitment as the principal of their utterances (in Goffman's terms) and not just to tell their version of the events, but to tell it differently and believably, and to work at redressing the way they figure in a story which renders their previously told actions justifiable and accountable.

NOTES

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¹ One instance where social status may be a factor in a speaker's non-use of CHP is in ex. 9, where the asymmetrical status between talk show host Montel Williams and teenage guest Angel is particularly marked as he participates in the telling and evaluation of her story.

² The focus of this analysis is specifically on the relationship between tense shifts and speaker footings; although there are undoubtedly other ways in which second accounts differ from preceding ones, I do not have space to discuss those differences here.

³ It is worth noting here that Angel is manipulated into telling this story in part using Montel's version of events rather than her own, resulting in a story which is not singly animated and authored, in Goffman's terms.

⁴ I am not suggesting here that, in single-version stories in mediated contexts, speakers never switch to CHP; rather, its use is routinely salient in second speakers' versions.

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