



Dragons' Den: Enacting persuasion in reality television



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ABSTRACT

This article aims to cast more light on how persuasive practices in business are enacted for an audience on television by comparing two versions of the television programme *Dragons' Den*. The main objective is to examine different interactional features of the programme within a cross-cultural analysis. Drawing on data from the Spanish and UK versions of the programme, the present paper is placed at the intersection between routine and cross-cultural business practices on the one hand and reality based broadcast on the other. The results show that the analysis of the key structural patterns in exerting interpersonal influence makes it possible to measure the impact and effectiveness of specific social influence tactics in entrepreneurial discourse.

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1. Introduction

This paper investigates how business persuasive practices are enacted for an audience in reality television. Given the complexity of persuasive effects and the identification of any particular persuasive tactic that is effective in all situations (O'Keefe, 2002), "persuasive practices" is used here as a cover term for any conscious attempt by one individual to change the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour of another individual through communication (Perloff, 2010). As such, persuasion in general and business persuasive practices in particular are here understood as a psychological phenomenon, which is inexorably bound up with language (Wilson, 2002).

The interactional architecture of persuasion, argumentation, and manipulation has been approached from the adjacent domains of linguistic research as varied as rhetoric (Jowett and O'Donnell, 2012; Wallace, 1963; Warmick, 2007), discursive psychology (Billig, 1999), and argumentation theory (Toulmin, 1959; Eemeren and Van Grootendorst, 2004). More specifically, contemporary approaches have started to realise that any form of communication is persuasive insofar as it attempts to influence people's behaviour and thinking (Díez-Prados, 2016; Díez-Prados and Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2013). Drawing on data from the Spanish and UK versions of the TV programme *Dragons' Den*, I take the prevailing persuasive feature of language use (Dillard and Lijiang, 2013; Tindale, 2004) and try to bring forth the interactive nature of persuasion (Antaki, 1994) in order to conceptualise persuasion as

an analytical tool that can give an account of the way(s) persuasive business discourse influences people's behaviour and thinking (Shotter, 1983) and determines interpersonal relations (García-Gómez, 2012).

The structure of the present papers is as follows: I begin with a brief and necessarily selective review of the literature, focusing primarily on televised entrepreneurial discourse. This is followed by a discussion of the data collection. I then explore the (in)effective deployment of social influence tactics in the data. I conclude the paper with a summary of the key findings of the study and a discussion of the implications.

2. Literature review

2.1. Media discourse: Televised entrepreneurial pitch

The potential of discourse analysis in the study of entrepreneurship has been recently acknowledged (Ahl and Marlow, 2012) and, over the last two decades, a new and increasingly dominant generation of entrepreneurship researchers has been trying to engage with entrepreneurship as discourse (Ahl, 2004; Bill et al., 2010; Stiff and Mongeau, 2003). These studies present entrepreneurial discourse from different and sometimes opposing angles. More specifically, most of these studies have attempted to broaden entrepreneurship research by including the social and cultural variations of entrepreneurship (Steyaert and Katz, 2004, p. 192). As a result, there is now a substantial body that conceptualises entrepreneurial discourse as a grand narrative (Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004; Weiskopf and Steyaert, 2009) and focuses on the effects of ideological control in conventional entrepreneurial

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discourses (Ogbor, 2000), women's entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2004, 2006), identity creation and management (Anderson and Warren, 2011), entrepreneurship discourse in magazines and newspapers (Langowitz and Morgan, 2003; Pietiläinen, 2001), and digital business communication practices (Darics, 2015).

By drawing on discourse analysis, these leading-edge researchers have shown that discourses play a central role in producing social realities insofar as they shape and construct, for instance, entrepreneurial identities and perceptions (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, pp. 1–2). Although these studies have permitted the exploration of academic research texts and gender discourses into women's entrepreneurship and they all have added to our understanding of the phenomenon (Neergaard and Ulhøi, 2007), power and ideology have received the most attention and the power of persuasive discourse has been somehow neglected.

Furthermore, there seems to be an important gap in media discourse in entrepreneurship research. With the exception of Spalton's (2010) and Daly and Davy's (2016a, 2016b) work, little attention has been paid to the televised entrepreneurial pitch as a sub-genre. These studies have mainly focused on defining what an investor pitch is and identifying its main characteristics and types. In particular, Daly and Davy (2016a, 2016b), drawing on the British version of *Dragons' Den*, take a multi-dimensional approach and concern themselves exclusively with the study of the structural, linguistic, and rhetorical features of the entrepreneurs' pitches; however, no attention has been paid to the instrumental process of negotiation after delivering the entrepreneurial pitch (i.e. strategies for enhancing compliance).

2.2. Social influence tactics: strategies for enhancing compliance

Over the years, many researchers have investigated social influence, persuasion, and interpersonal change from various fields such as psychology, sociology, and linguistics. The result has been an eclectic body of research that has covered the (in)effective use of different social influence tactics in a wide range of contexts and settings. Although the proposed number of tactics may vary (cf. Bauer and Erdogan, 2009; Dolinski, 2000), most researchers agree that understanding of compliance cannot be achieved without understanding the concepts of negotiation¹ and social influence tactics (Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy, 2011). Yet how exactly compliance is induced (i.e. resistance and attitude change) has been a matter of debate.

Given that this study focuses on the interactive part of the programme that takes a question-and-answer format by which business experts negotiate a business contract, I will concern myself here with the social influence tactics for gaining compliance that use multiple requests²: (1) the *foot-in-the-door tactic* – a multiple-request technique in which the focal request is preceded by a smaller request that is likely to be accepted (Freedman and Fraser, 1966; Petrova et al., 2007); and (2) the *door-in-the-face tactic* – a multiple-request technique in which the focal request is preceded by a larger request that is likely to be refused (Cialdini et al., 1976; Hogg and Vaughan, 2008). The extant literature indicates both the high effectiveness of these social influence tactics and the scarce theoretical studies explaining their working (Burger, 1999; Burger and Caldwell, 2003).

By putting persuasive discourse at the forefront, this paper contributes to the field of media discourse in entrepreneurship

discourse by exploring the under-researched field of televised entrepreneurial pitch as a sub-genre. More specifically, this study attempts to throw light on the strategic use of business persuasive social tactics – the deployment of communicational strategies in business negotiations aimed at enhancing compliance and persuading people to comply with requests (Redien-Collot and Lefebvre, 2015) – in both the British and Spanish versions of the TV programme *Dragons' Den*. In other words, I analyse how business experts from two different countries, after having listened to the entrepreneurs' pitch, deploy specific social influence tactics in order to persuade entrepreneurs to comply to their requests as a condition for investing and becoming partners. In doing so, this study is placed at the intersection between routine and cross-cultural business practices on the one hand and reality-based broadcast talk on the other.

3. Method

3.1. *Dragons' Den*: Description of the data

Dragons' Den was first launched in Japan and it is now an international brand with versions airing in the UK and Spain ("*Tu Oportunidad*", among many other countries in the world. Since it was first broadcast in January 2005 on the UK's BBC2, the British version has become particularly popular in UK – as series fourteen is being aired at present; however, the Spanish version of *Dragons' Den* ("*Tu Oportunidad*") was first broadcast eight years later on the national channel TVE1 and it has only run for two series.

In the British and the Spanish versions of the programme, the entrepreneurs' pitch must be persuasive enough so as to convince a panel of business experts consisting of three male and two female venture investors who, as the programme's website claims, are willing to invest their own money in exchange for equity. The programme's success is based on some basic golden rules that give structure to both the entrepreneurs' persuasive pitches and subsequent negotiations.

Firstly, entrepreneurs have up to three minutes to introduce themselves and to explain the name of the business, the amount of money they are pitching for, and the exact percentage of equity they are willing to give away in their company. Right after the entrepreneur's pitch, the five business experts are free to ask questions to get some further details about what they have just heard. Although entrepreneurs do not have to answer all of their questions, the amount of information they provide and the way they sell their product do affect the outcome. In addition, entrepreneurs are allowed to have an advocate in the Den in case they need some help answering some of the business experts' questions. After the entrepreneurs answer the questions posed, the business experts can declare themselves 'out' if they are not interested. Finally, the entrepreneurs are free to accept or refuse investment if they think the deal does not satisfy their financial needs.

3.2. *Dragons' Den* and "*Tu Oportunidad*": The selection and classification process

This research reports the results of quantitative and qualitative discursive analyses of the social influence tactics both British and Spanish business experts deployed during the interactive part of the programme. Initially, a content analysis of all the programmes broadcast in the first two series was conducted. This content analysis made it possible to subdivide the interactive part into topically defined segments. Given that the focus of this paper is on the strategic use of business social influence tactics, only those business negotiation episodes which shared the following features were selected: (a) the entrepreneurs asked for a similar amount

¹ In this paper, the concept of negotiation is used to describe the interaction between business experts and entrepreneurs, in which entrepreneurs are induced to comply with the business experts' requests as a condition for investing and becoming partners.

² The first request functions as a set-up for the second, real request (cf. Hogg and Vaughan, 2002).

of money in exchange for a similar percentage of the business during the pitch; (b) the business experts asked questions to clarify any possible doubts right after the pitch; (c) at least one business expert was interested in the business proposal and started negotiating the business offer; and (d) the entrepreneur was offered a deal he or she had to accept or reject.

In the light of these features, 10 negotiation episodes each from the UK and Spanish versions of the programme were identified and transcribed,³ providing a total of 6350 utterances in the English version and 6467 utterances in the Spanish version. Each of these topically defined passages constituting persuasive behaviour was treated as a macro-speech act (Van Dijk, 1977). Independently from the positive or negative result, the selection was then made on the premise that if business experts were presented with similar requests (i.e. a specific amount of money and a similar percentage of the business), but these pitches were not all successful, the inspection of the interactive segment of the programme may shed further light on the use of social influence tactics in general and how business practices are enacted for an audience on reality television in particular. It is worth noting that, of the 10 negotiation episodes selected, seven business experts decided to invest their money and both parties reached an agreement in the case of the Spanish data, whereas only three business experts made an offer and both parties reached an agreement in the case of the British data. In order to analyse these 20 negotiation episodes, a two-fold process was followed.

The first stage of the analysis was therefore founded on the premise that the only way to understand the mediated nature of this interaction and the social influence tactics business experts deploy to persuade entrepreneurs to comply is to study the talk itself (Hutchby, 2001, p. 172). Therefore, the turn-structure of the negotiations was analysed. By looking at how the talk itself is organised, I attempted to “gain insight into the very interactional production of one aspect of a mediated public event” (Hutchby, 2001, p. 171). In the light of this, the analysis concentrated on looking at the turn structure and identifying the illocutionary force of the British and Spanish business experts’ elicitation. In the belief that, independently from the responses, the understanding of the illocutionary force embedded within the business experts’ elicitation may signal whether or not the business pitch had been persuasive enough and business experts were willing to invest. In order to do so, each and every elicitation was coded for its pragmatic meaning⁴ and classified into a consistent and manageable taxonomy of four principles of classification of the main communication acts in the British and Spanish data.

Table 1 shows the principles of classification of elicitation (Tsui, 1994) found in the data and the frequency of each pragmatic meaning of utterances.

As Table 1 shows, both the British and the Spanish business experts exploit four types of elicitation in order to clarify possible misunderstandings or things they could not understand (i.e. *elicit: clarify*), invite commitment of some kind (i.e. *elicit: commit*); gain compliance by eliciting the entrepreneur to agree (i.e. *elicit: agree*); and gain information that will help them assess the business proposal (i.e. *elicit: inform*). Given that the frequency of *elicit: agree* is significantly higher, the study focused on measuring the impact of this type of elicitation on entrepreneurs’ decisions and actions leading to compliance with the business experts’ requests.

The second stage of the analysis revealed that the way(s) turn-taking was managed during the business experts’ and entrepreneurs’ business negotiations showed that this interaction unfolded as a consistent sequence of three-part exchanges. Both British and Spanish business experts produced a particular first part in the form of an *elicit: agree* which responded to the two above-mentioned social influence tactics; the *foot-in-the-door tactic* and the *door-in-the-face tactic*. Likewise, the analysis showed that, after an eliciting exchange initiated by an *elicit: agree*, either a responding or a challenging act could occur.⁵ Here I suggest that these responding moves seem to prospect the need for a follow-up move that realises two main communicational strategies (cf. Redien-Collot and Lefebvre, 2015): (1) **Engagement** – An act that appeals to pathos and focuses on showing the business expert’s involvement in the entrepreneur’s business project; and (2) **Provocation** – An act that appeals to ethos, focusing on urging entrepreneurs to reconsider their business project by challenging their personal and professional self-image.

As will be discussed below, the exploration of the presence and function of the follow-up move may help to shed further light on the (in)effective deployment of a particular social influence tactic.

4. Analysis

4.1. Exploring the deployment of the foot-in-the-door tactic in televised business negotiations

The analysis of the sequences in which both business experts and entrepreneurs negotiate their business contract reveals that business experts are the ones who consistently initiate conversation exchanges by means of *elicit: agree*. Furthermore, a closer inspection of these sequences makes it possible to argue that this type of elicitation realises a *foot-in-the-door tactic* (Freedman and Fraser, 1966). Here I suggest, as may be seen in Extract 1, that these elicitation work at an interpersonal level insofar as they are used as an attempt to build rapport (i.e. showing interest in the entrepreneur’s product) and contribute to a positive sense of in-group membership (i.e. you and I as potential business partners) in order to gain compliance from the entrepreneur.

This first extract comes from the Spanish version of the programme and illustrates how Spanish business experts produce *elicit: agree* that deploys the *foot-in-the-door tactic* as an attempt to establish common ground between themselves and the entrepreneurs (Tsui, 1994, p. 87), promote social “mutuality” (Brazil, 1984, p. 34), and be able to reach an agreement that benefits them both.

After having elicited, in lines 1–2, some further information that was missing in the entrepreneur’s previous monologue (e.g. “When do you make a profit? When you sell your own brand or when you sell to third parties?”), this extract illustrates well how the *foot-in-the-door tactic* works. First, the business expert shows his interest in the business proposal and invites the entrepreneurs to agree with a small request (i.e. taking a higher percentage and offering half of the money initially proposed). In particular, the business expert, in line 11, gets the entrepreneur to agree to a small request (e.g. “Is it OK if I double the investment you asked for and the same interest rate?”) in the belief that the entrepreneur will later on be more willing to comply with a larger request (e.g. lines 13–15: “Then will it also be OK if we triple my investment and you give me 30% instead of 15%, so that we can work together and become business partners?”).

³ I have chosen to transcribe the interactions in a way that is accessible to readers who are not familiar with conversational literature or phonological/prosodic symbols. Furthermore, the transcriptions do not include non-verbal communication features due to the edited nature of the data. Given that it was not possible to analyse the business experts’ and entrepreneurs’ hand movements, gaze or any other relevant gesture in a systematic manner, it was decided not to include them.

⁴ Given that many utterances are multi-functional, the coding process accommodated annotation at different levels or for different functions.

⁵ A responding move satisfies the illocutionary act of the initiating move, whereas a challenging move challenges “the presuppositions of the preceding initiating move” (Tsui, 1994, p. 163).

Table 1

Principles of classification of initiating moves: elicitations in the data.

Initiating move (produced by business experts)	British data		Spanish data	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Elicit: agree	996	59%	1137	58.7%
Elicit: clarify	61	3.5%	59	2.9%
Elicit: commit	167	6.2%	91	4.6%
Elicit: inform	524	30.8%	647	33.4%
	Total	1687		1934

- 1 Male business expert (A): ¿Cuándo ganáis dinero? ¿cuándo vendéis con
- 2 vuestra marca o para terceros? ((*When do you make profit? When you sell*
- 3 *your own brand or to third parties?*))
- 4 Male Entrepreneur (B): Ganamos siempre ((*We always make profit.*))
- 5 A: pero ¿dónde ganáis más? ((*But where do you earn more?*))
- 6 B: Sinceramente ganamos más en los proyectos profesionales ((*Honestly, we*
- 7 *earn more in professional projects*))
- 8 A: ¿estarías dispuesto a ceder un 15% en vez de 10% de tu negocio a cambio
- 9 de mi ayuda y compromiso? ((*Are you willing to cede 15% instead of 10%*
- 10 *in return for my help and commitment?*))
- 11 B: Sí, claro ((*Yes, of course*))
- 12 A: Muy bien hecho ¡cuenta con mi ayuda! ((sonríe)) ¿te parece bien si doblo la
- 13 inversion que solicitas al mismo tipo de interés? ((*Very well done. Count on*
- 14 *my help! [smile] Is it ok if I double the investment you asked for and the*
- 15 *same interest rate?*))
- 16 B: Eso sería magnífico ((*That'd be fantastic*))
- 17 A: ¡Perfecto! Vamos juntos a por ello ¿te parecerá bien también si triplico la
- 18 inversion y me cedés el 30% y no el 15% para que podamos trabajar juntos
- 19 y ser socios? ((*Perfect! We'll do it together. Then will it also be ok if we*
- 20 *triple my investment and you give me 30% instead of 15% so that we can*
- 21 *work together and become business partners?*))
- 22 B: ((piensa durante unos segundos)) Sí, bueno, creo en mi negocio. ((*[He*
- 23 *thinks for a while] Yes, well, I believe in my business*
- 24 A: Entonces trato hecho [se levanta a darle la mano para cerrar el acuerdo].
- 25 ((*Deal! he stands up and shakes on the deal*))

Extract 1.

In this passage, the sequence of *elicit: agree* that realises the *foot-in-the door tactic* works on the principle of consistency (Petrova et al., 2007); that is to say, the second *elicit: agree* is consistent with or similar in nature to the original small request embedded within the first *elicit: agree*. Although the principle of consistency may account for the effectiveness of this social influence tactic (Petrova et al., 2007), I suggest that the effectiveness of the tactic seems to be connected with the presence and function that the follow-up move realises. In lines 13 and 17, the business experts' follow-up moves appeal to the entrepreneurs' pathos by underlining his **engagement** in taking responsibility for the entrepreneur's business (e.g. "*Very well done. Count on my help! [smile]*", "*Perfect! We'll do it together*").

It can be argued that the follow-up move has a positive impact on the entrepreneurs' attitudes insofar as it helps the business expert relate to both the entrepreneurs and their business proposals. Furthermore, inspection of the follow-up moves in both versions of the programme reveals that they are aimed at defining

entrepreneurs and themselves as members of the same social category, thus sharing a similar social identity. Consider the following extract in contrast to the previous one.

Extract 2, from a different negotiation sequence, illustrates well how this business expert fails to persuade the entrepreneur to comply with her requests as a condition for investing and becoming partners despite deploying the same social tactic. As in **Extract 1**, this business expert first shows her interest in the business proposal and invites the entrepreneur to agree with exactly the very same small request (i.e. having a slightly higher percentage and offering half of the money initially proposed). In spite of the fact that all instances of *elicit: agree* generate compliance responses on the part of the entrepreneur (lines 9, 12, 15, and 17), the *foot-in-the-door tactic* eventually fails and the business expert declares herself out.

As **Extracts 1 and 2** confirm, the (in)effectiveness of this social influence tactic is sensitive to the pragmatic function that the follow-up move fulfils in the interaction. **Extract 1** may be

-
- 1 Female business expert (A): ¿y con esos 75.000 euros qué harías? ((*What would you do with 75,000 euros?*))
- 2 Male entrepreneur (B): en un primer momento invertiríamos en la
3 infraestructura ((*First, we'd invest in the infrastructure*))
- 4 A: y ¿nada más? ((*is that it?*))
- 5 B: bueno, claro, también tendríamos que hacer un estudio más sistemático del
6 Mercado ((*Well, of course, we'd have to study the market systematically*))
- 7 A: No estoy convencida de lo que me propones porque no te veo seguro. Eso
8 implica que alguien vaya contigo, o sea, 50% y no al 51-49 ¿te parece?
((*I'm not convinced of your proposal since you're not confident. This means you need someone to go with you fifty-fifty, and not 51-49%. Do you agree?*))
- 9 B: Sí, en principio sí ((*Yes, initially I think so*))
- 10 A: Chico listo ¿ves viable una inversion de 38.500 euros por la mitad de lo que
11 solicitas⁶? ((*Clever boy, do you see viable a 38,500 euros investment in exchange for half of what you asked?*))
- 12 B: Sería un buen comienzo ((*That'd be a good point of departure*))
- 13 A: Mejor de lo que la propuesta merece. Voy a redondear ¿aceptarías 50.000
14 euros por el 49% que tanto querías? ((*Much better than the one your proposal deserves. I'm going to round, would you accept 50,000 euros in exchange for the 49% you wanted?*))
- 15 B: Umm, pues sí creo que me tengo que tirar al barro. ((*Umm, well I think I have to accept it*))
- 16 A: Un negocio necesita alguien con decisión ¿Hacemos trato? ((*Running a business requires a determined person Deal?*))
- 17 B: Bueno pues you creo que sí ((*Well erm I think so*))
- 18 A Un negocio necesita otra personalidad diferente a la tuya ¿Trato? ((*Running a business calls for someone with a stronger personality than yours. Deal?*))
- 20 B: Voy a pasar ((*I pass*))
- 21 A: Estoy fuera (visiblemente enfadada) ((*I'm out [visibly angry]*))
-

Extract 2.

considered a core example of the effective deployment of the *foot-in-the-door tactic*. This stretch of talk reveals that, even though follow-up moves are not compulsory insofar as they are not “specifically prospected” by the response (Sinclair, 1992, p. 87), the interaction unfolds as a consistent succession of three move exchange structures in which the follow-up move is not only present but also necessary for the tactic to be effective.

Furthermore, the quantitative analysis of both versions of the programme highlights that the negotiation episodes in which the follow-up moves focus on **engagement** (i.e. evaluate positively either the product or the entrepreneur's compliance with the business experts' requests and demonstrate the business experts' willingness in taking responsibility) are correlated with the effectiveness of the *foot-in-the-door tactic*, whereas the negotiation episodes in which the follow-up moves focus on **provocation** show those cases in which the tactic fails (see Tables 2 and 3).

As Tables 2 and 3 show, the ineffectiveness of the *foot-in-the-door tactic* is signalled by a significantly higher number of follow-up moves that focus on provocation – that is, follow-up moves that challenge the entrepreneurs to reconsider their business objectives (Redien-Collot, 2009). The presence of these particular types of

follow-up moves seems to be counterproductive since they appeal to the business expert's ethos. In other words, these follow-up moves establish the business expert's credibility to the detriment of the entrepreneurs' self-image. As Extract 2 shows, the fact that the business expert, in lines 16 and 18, places the emphasis on the entrepreneurs' lack of business knowledge damages their self-image severely (e.g. “Running a business requires a determined person”; “Running a business calls for someone with a stronger personality than yours”).

Interestingly enough, the correlation between the presence of the follow-up moves that focus on engagement and the effectiveness of the *door-in-the-face tactic*, as Extract 3 may illustrate, is kept even in those cases in which the requirements of the consistency principle are not met. Consider the following extract:

As Extract 3 illustrates, the requirements of the consistency principle are not met here since, contrary to the previous two extracts, there is no correlation between the amount of money required and the percentage the business expert requests during the negotiation. In spite of a recurrent presence of challenging acts by means of which the entrepreneurs verbalise their dissatisfaction with the business expert's offer, the business expert succeeds in

Table 2

Dragon's Den: Exchanges serving a foot-in-the-door tactic.

	British data							
	Effective tactic				Ineffective tactic			
Initiating move	Elicit: agree 159				516			
Responding move	Challenge 54		Response 105		Challenge 123		Response 393	
Follow-up move	Engag. 47	Provoc. 7	Engag. 91	Provoc. 14	Engag. 13	Provoc. 110	Engag. 35	Provoc. 358

Table 3

Tu Oportunidad: Exchanges serving a foot-in-the-door tactic.

	Spanish data							
	Effective tactic				Ineffective tactic			
Initiating move	Elicit: agree 924				213			
Responding move	Challenge 208		Response 716		Challenge 96		Response 117	
Follow-up move	Engag. 179	Provoc. 29	Engag. 623	Provoc. 93	Engag. 17	Provoc. 79	Engag. 9	Provoc. 108

- 1 Business expert (A): Right, what does it cost to make a box like this?
- 2 Entrepreneur (B): It costs me four pounds 55 to put the box together like that
- 3 and I sell to Harvey Nichols at 7 pounds 50 and they retail for 14 pounds
- 4 95.
- 5 A: Not bad. What would you say if I offer you one third of the money in
- 6 exchange for 20%?
- 7 B: That'd be great
- 8 A: I like your idea. We can make a great team. What would you say then if I
- 9 offer you half of the money in exchange for 49%?
- 10 B: I prefer your first offer
- 11 A: Your business has an extraordinary potential and I want to be part of it.
- 12 Would you accept my offer?
- 13 B: 49% is too much
- 14 A: Let me help you. Trust me! Would you accept then?
- 15 B: ((thinks for a while)) yes, well, yes I'm interested
- A: I knew you'd do the right thing. Well done

Extract 3.

persuading the entrepreneur to comply with his requests and they become business partners.

As suggested above, the follow-up moves in [Extract 3](#) focus on **engagement** and contribute to constructing an in-group entrepreneurial social identity (e.g. line 8: "I like your idea. We can make a great team" and line 14: "Let me help you. Trust me!"). As a result, the business expert negotiates the business offer and puts pressure on the entrepreneur to make concessions, and eventually they reach agreement. By appealing to the entrepreneur's emotion (i.e. pathos), the business expert not only upgrades the agreement ([Pomerantz, 1984, p. 68](#)), but also counteracts the challenging acts that the entrepreneur produces.

4.2. Exploring the deployment of the door-in-the face tactic in televised business negotiations

Inspection of the data reveals that only British business experts initiate conversation exchanges by means of *elicit: agree* that are aimed at realising a *door-in-the-face* tactic ([Cialdini et al., 1976](#)). Even though the British business experts preceded the presentation of the main point they wanted the entrepreneurs to agree with by a larger request that was bound to be refused, the three instances identified in the data show that this particular social influence tactic failed systematically. As [Extract 4](#) illustrates, the business experts were not able to persuade the entrepreneurs to

1	Business expert (A): What does it cost you to make a box like this?
2	Entrepreneur (B): It costs me four pounds 55 to put the box together like that
3	and I sell to Harvey Nichols at \$7 pounds 50 and they retail for 14 pounds
4	95.
5	A: I think you're fantastic what you have done is absolutely fantastic and not
6	just anyone can build a business. You must have worked really hard and
7	I'm really excited but I am not convinced that this business will really make
8	enough money worth to me a return. But I am going to make you an offer.
9	What would you say if I offer you half of the money and I ask for one third
10	of the business?
11	B: No, this is not good enough
12	A: Think you're wrong, but would you accept if I offer you all of the money in
13	exchange for one third of the business?
14	B: That's too much
15	A: Think you're wrong again. So you don't want to accept?
16	B: No, I feel that it would not be correct
17	A: Fair enough. I'm out

Extract 4.

Table 4

Dragon's Den: Exchanges serving a door-in-the face tactic.

	British data			
	Ineffective tactic			
Initiating move	Elicit: agree 321			
Responding move	Challenge 168		Response 153	
Follow-up move	Engagement 15	Provocation 153	Engagement 19	Provocation 134

comply with their requests as a condition for investing and becoming partners. Consider the following extract:

In this example, the business expert first evaluates, in lines 5 and 6, the entrepreneur and her business proposal positively in a direct way (e.g. "I think you're fantastic. What you have done is absolutely fantastic [...] You must have worked really hard. [...]"). Then he introduces, in line 6, a shortcoming of the business that justifies the need for negotiating the economic offer (e.g. "[B]ut I am not convinced that this business will really make enough money worth to me a return."). Once the business expert has paved the way for the *door-in-the-face* tactic, the first request that is likely to be refused is introduced in lines 9 and 10 (e.g. "What would you say if I offer you half of the money and I ask for one-third of the business?").

As expected, the entrepreneur refuses, in line 11, the first economic offer by assessing it negatively (e.g. "No, this is not good enough"). The exchanges are then perceived as incomplete and the business expert produces follow-up moves, in lines 12 and 15, that focus on provocation, urging the entrepreneur to reconsider the offer by questioning his professional objectives, business knowledge, and self-image (e.g. "Think you're wrong", "Think you're wrong again").

In the three instances identified, the quantitative analysis highlights the fact that the business experts mainly produce follow-up moves that rely on provocation (see Table 4). It can then be argued

that the experts attempt to appeal to their own ethos (i.e. they represent themselves as authority figures) and, in so doing, show off their expertise in the field and publicly damage entrepreneurs' professional and personal self-image.

Consequently, far from urging the entrepreneurs to reconsider the financial offer, this focus on provocation has a negative impact on the entrepreneurs' attitude and causes the systematic failure of the *door-in-the-face* tactic. The following extract also illustrates this point:

In Extract 5, the business expert highlights, in lines 5 and 6, the limitations in the entrepreneur's business proposal right away (e.g. "You can't drag your prices down without having a huge manufacturing facility to manufacture your product.") and then uses *elicit: agree*, in lines 6 and 7, in order to offer the amount of money the entrepreneur asked for, but demands a double percentage (e.g. "Here's my offer. I'm going to offer you the full 60 k but I'd like 40% of the business. Agree?"). As argued above, the *door-in-the-face* tactic is not effective and generates refusals, in lines 8 and 12, by the entrepreneur to both economic offers, as they do not live up to his expectations (e.g. "I only offer 20%"; "Sorry"). The follow-up moves, in lines 5 and 13, publicly denounce the entrepreneur's ability to make the right decision (e.g. "You can't drag your prices down without having a huge manufacturing facility") or lack of knowledge (e.g. "You don't know what you're talking about") or can be said to appeal to the business expert's ethos. Far from enhancing conformity and urging the entrepreneur to see he is

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- 1 Male business expert (A): Talk to me about the supply chain of this. How
 2 much does it cost you to actually manufacture?
 3 Male entrepreneur (B): It's 46 pence cost. I sell it to a wholesaler of 87 pence
 4 plus VAT they then sell it on to a retailer at one pound 25 plus VAT.
 5 A: You can't drag your prices down without having a huge manufacturing
 6 facility to manufacture your product. Here's my offer. I'm going to offer
 7 you the full 60k but I'd like 40% of the business . Agree?
 8 B: I only offer 20%
 9 A: you want me out then. You haven't managed to convince me or excite me I
 10 very much doubt if it's going to be a big business, but I can make it work.
 11 Would you say no twice to 60,000 thousand pounds in exchange for 40%?
 12 B: Sorry
 13 A: You don't know what you're talking about. You really need me and I know
 14 I am worth more. I'm going to offer you 80,000 pounds but I want 40% of
 15 the business. What do you say now?
 16 B: I would like to accept your offer, but I can't
 17 A: I'm out ((disappointed))
-

Extract 5.

wrong and reconsider his business proposal, these follow-up moves damage the entrepreneur's self-image and he himself refuses the offer. In the end, the business expert declares he is out.

5. Conclusion

In the reality television data presented here, I have examined how persuasion is enacted in televised business discourse. In particular, the study has highlighted the presence of specific structural patterns in the process of exerting interpersonal influence in televised business negotiations. First, the quantitative analysis of elicitation has made it possible to focus the study on the most frequent type (i.e. *elicit: agree*) that business experts use while negotiating a business offer. The study has then pointed out the fact that British and Spanish business experts tend to initiate conversation exchanges by producing *elicit: agree*. The analysis has also shown that this type of elicitation realises two particular social influence tactics: the *foot-in-the-door tactic* and the *door-in-the-face tactic*.

One of the most important contributions to the field has been the attempt to understand the role that the follow-up move plays in the realisation of these two social influence tactics. Apart from endorsing what the entrepreneurs have responded, the quantitative analysis has revealed that the follow-up move fulfils two key communicational strategies: engagement and provocation. In particular, the analysis has underscored that there seems to be a correlation between the presence of this particular follow-up move and the effectiveness of this social tactic; that is, those follow-up moves that focus on engagement appeal to the entrepreneur's pathos and, systematically, have a positive impact on the deployment of the social influence tactic. However, those follow-up moves that focus on provocation tend to appeal to the business expert's ethos and have a negative impact on the deployment of the social influence tactic. As the analysis has shown, those follow-up moves focusing on provocation, far from prompting the entrepreneurs to change their self-representation and reach an agreement, break off negotiations.

The main limitation of the present research concerns the edited nature of the data which makes it somewhat constructed and therefore inauthentic (Fairclough, 1995). However, even though reality television programmes as broadcast talk may be an institutionally located conversational practice that is articulated to an overhearing audience (Barton, 2009; Lorenzo-Dus, 2009), the present study is in line with the claim that this kind of talk is still worth analysing (Lunt and Livingstone, 2013) as reality television programmes provide people with a new public forum where their voices can be heard (Deery, 2015).

All in all, the present study has yielded findings that have insights into media discourse in entrepreneurship research. More specifically, it has direct implications for the under-researched field of entrepreneurial coaching and mentoring (Redien-Collot and Lefebvre, 2015) to the extent that raising awareness of these discursive strategies can cast further light on these specific business practices as well as better prepare people to negotiate potential business. This is of particular interest in the field of entrepreneurship and angel investing (Gullander and Napier, 2002).

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