

Power in Turkish migrant families¹



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ABSTRACT. In this article, power relationships in Turkish families living in the Netherlands were studied by analyzing *competition* in conversational turn-taking. The notion of *competition* refers to those instances of turn-taking in which two or more persons are talking simultaneously, and one of them completes his or her turn at the cost of the other(s). A power hierarchy can be constructed on the basis of symmetries and asymmetries in winning and losing verbal competitions. The power structures of two immigrant Turkish families of different orientation and origin have been analyzed with the intention, from a methodological point of view, of contributing to the valid and reliable measurement of conversational power. In addition, the analyses reported in this article differ from mainstream research on Turkish family power, in that the focus is on *power processes* rather than on *power outcomes*. Finally, the data are based on observation rather than self-report. The results do not support the stereotype that Turkish families are rigid hierarchies of patriarchal authority. Power patterns in Turkish families – especially migrant families – appear to be changing rapidly.

KEY WORDS: *family interaction, interruptions, migration, power, turn taking*

1. Introduction

It is generally agreed that there is a sharp contrast between the Dutch and Turkish cultures, and that family structure and communication patterns are key elements in this contrast. Similarly, terms such as: 'oriented to respect', 'authoritarian', 'patriarchal', and 'imperative' are used to describe the Turkish family pattern (e.g. Brouwer, 1997; Eppink, 1981; Van Esch, 1982). It is argued that the strong emphasis on the distribution of authority within the family during the socialization of Turkish children offers them little opportunity to develop as autonomous and responsible individuals (Holtbrügge, 1975; Neumann, 1980; Pels, 1992; Pels, 1994; Schrader, Nikles and Griese, 1979). The Western

European pattern, in contrast, is considered to be more egalitarian, and more oriented to the development of autonomous and responsible individuals.

The image of Turkish family relationships as being structured in an extremely hierarchical way is not only articulated in Western European studies of Turkish immigrants. It is also present in Turkish family sociology (Abadan-Unat, 1986). Clear role differentiation, large power imbalances in parent–child relationships, the supremacy of male over female family members, and the well-established overall authority of the father are key words in the description of rural or low income urban Turkish families in particular (Fişek, 1982; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996; Kiray, 1976a; Kudat, 1975; Levine, 1982). To a high degree, Turkish immigrants in Europe originate from these two types of families.

Although the image of male dominance in Turkish families is supported by research findings, these findings have not convinced all participants in the debates on Turkish family structure. Some argue that the image reflects a negative stereotype, others that it is an overgeneralization that ignores, for example, social class and demographic differences, while others again argue that it is a simplification that results from the limited means of measuring power within the family. The aim of the present study is to contribute empirically to these discussions by considering the power relationships in Turkish families residing in the Netherlands.

It is widely acknowledged that the empirical study of family power presents many methodological pitfalls. To take one example, in the United States and Europe the mainstream paradigm is characterized by, among other things, taking the so-called decision-making outcome as the primary indicator of power. This leads to an emphasis on husband–wife power relationships rather than on family relationships, and the use of self-report methods rather than observational methods (Cromwell and Olson, 1975; McDonald, 1980; Scanzoni, 1979). In fact, power relationships are often assessed only on the basis of ‘wives’ retrospective reporting on the outcomes of decisions made on certain issues’ (Olson and Cromwell, 1975a: 7). Empirical studies of power relationships in Turkish families have generally been carried out according to this Western mainstream paradigm (the key studies in Turkish family sociology being Fox, 1973; Kağıtçıbaşı and Kansu, 1977; Timur, 1972; Timur, 1978). As stated before, the results point to predominantly male decision-making in Turkish families (Kağıtçıbaşı and Kansu, 1977; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982; Timur, 1972; Timur, 1978).

The limitations of this decision-making approach have been formulated in reviews addressing methodological issues in family power studies (McDonald, 1980; Olson and Cromwell, 1975b; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970). These point out that power is a perceptual as well as a behavioural phenomenon, and can therefore be studied on the basis of both self-report and observational methods. It is further argued that power is multidimensional in nature, including not only ‘outcome components’ but also ‘socio-structural’ and ‘interactional components’. Olson and Cromwell (1975a; 1975b) have attempted to conceptualize this multidimensionality by dividing power into three distinct domains: power bases, power

processes, and power outcomes. Power bases refer to 'the resources an individual possesses which may increase their ability to exercise control in a given situation' (1975a: 6). Power processes focus on the interaction of family members, and include variables such as 'assertiveness' and 'control'. Power outcomes include such factors as who makes the final decision. The authors observed that very little systematic work has been done with regard to power processes, which both conceptually and operationally is the weakest and least substantiated of the three domains.²

Although progress has been made during the past 20 years regarding the recognition of power as a multidimensional phenomenon, it has been noted (Komter, 1985; McDonald, 1980) that decision-making outcome continues to be the primary indicator of conjugal and family power.

In the present study, power is primarily studied from an alternative point of view, which involves analyzing processes in the structure of everyday conversations. Aspects of power outcome are also taken into consideration as a result of studying decisions in overt behaviour, and by examining Turkish mothers' self-reports about family decision-making. In contrast to mainstream research, the data used here concern the entire family, and not just the marital dyad.

In the present study the details of everyday interaction are scrutinized microscopically. Although the study is small-scale, in terms of the number of families that have been observed, the number of interactional units that have been analyzed is quite substantial. Insights have been applied from the social-psychological tradition of analyses of conversational interaction, as well as from the sociological conversational analysis. These two approaches to the study of conversation can be characterized as follows:

(1) The foundations of the social-psychological analysis of conversations have been laid by Bales' (1951) Interaction Process Analysis. Typically, and in contrast to the sociological approach, conversation is studied as an arena of social or interpersonal processes, e.g.: 'affiliation' vs. 'control' (Leary, 1957; Meeuwesen, 1989), 'power' vs. 'solidarity' (Brown and Gilman, 1960), 'task orientation' vs. 'socio-emotional orientation' (Bales, 1951), 'presumptuousness' (Stiles, 1992), 'relative status' (Stiles, 1992), 'degree of imposition' (Meeuwesen, Schaap and Van der Staak, 1991), etc. Overwhelmingly, the data are collected in experimentally-controlled conditions. The stream of conversational behaviour is segmented into units which are categorized (Bakeman and Gottman, 1986), the results of the analysis are quantified, and the findings of this approach are evaluated in terms of reliability and validity.

(2) The aim of sociological conversational analysis is to gain insight into the implicit knowledge structure of members of a society or a specific sociological group (for example, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). The focus is on the analysis and description of the systematics and the formal structure of conversations (Nofsinger, 1991). The analysis is qualitative and in-depth, and the material is collected in natural settings (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). Most conversation analysts tend to be 'agnostic' with respect to power (Hutchby, 1996: 482).

Of course, this clear, twofold distinction is too simple to fit neatly into everyday reality, and in fact, a lot of studies have adopted a middle course. For example, Zimmerman and West's (1975) study of dominance in male, female and mixed dyads combines aspects of both approaches: natural conversations are analyzed with respect to turn-taking patterns (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974); results are quantified and interpreted in terms of power. Hutchby (1996) shows that conversation analysis does not need to refrain from using the notion of power. He analyses arguments on a British radio talk show, and relates his qualitative analysis to a conception of power which views power in terms of differential distributions of discursive resources. More examples of combinations of research strategies can be found in Ng and Bradac (1993).

The present study also combines different research strategies. From the sociological conversational analysis, we derive the turn-taking system as developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). Furthermore, the use of naturalistic material corresponds to the sociological approach. The idea that one can gain insight into underlying social processes by studying the details of talk is derived from the social psychological approach (Thorne and Henley, 1975; Ng and Bradac, 1993). Further, the categorization and quantification of the interactional material corresponds to the social-psychological approach. Also in line with the social-psychological approach, we tried to underpin the validity of our operationalizations, carried out analyses of reliability and controlled our naturalistic material for potentially relevant variables, such as topic of conversation (see under 3).

We studied power processes by focusing on specific types of turn-taking patterns, namely, those which involve so-called competition. The notion of competition refers to those instances of conversational turn-taking in which two or more persons are talking simultaneously, and one of them succeeds in holding the floor at the cost of the other(s). More specifically, it covers the phenomena of 'interruptions' and 'competitive starts'. A successful interruption is one that has the effect of stopping the interruptee from talking, and to that extent controlling the conversation to a certain degree and thereby exerting power (see also Davis, 1988). The simultaneous start is similar in that it involves one party continuing the conversation at the expense of the other interlocutor(s), thereby controlling the conversation and exercising power. The attribution of this social meaning to these conversational phenomena, however, is firmly disputed in previous studies (e.g. Bilmes, 1997; Cameron, 1998; Ferguson, 1977; Goldberg, 1990; Hellinger, 1990; Hellinger, 1995; James and Clarke, 1993; Nofsinger, 1991). Hellinger (1995), for example, argues that an interruption can have different functions in actual discourse, so that an interpretation such as 'conversational dominance' captures only one of several possibilities. James and Clarke (1993), among others, show clearly that simultaneous talk in conversation can bear a supportive and cooperative function. These critical comments on the interpretation of conversational competition in terms of dominance are pursued further in this study (more specifically in 3.3 and 3.5). They are addressed by the use of a fine-grained

category system of competitive phenomena, i.e. a category system that (1) takes into account contextual factors (such as topic or theme of the conversation; the course of the previous and subsequent conversation; etc.); and (2) allows distinctions in terms of the degree of disruptiveness/cooperativeness of the conversational competition. Furthermore, it will be argued that a relevant, but frequently ignored perspective for this dispute on the interpretation of competitive phenomena, is the notion of 'asymmetry'. Specific types of conversational competition are related to dominance, not on *a priori* grounds (Cameron, 1998), but if different people in a larger number of data vis-à-vis each other make an asymmetrical use of the winning and losing positions in these competitions, they distribute their relative power.³

The twofold aim of this study can now be summarized as follows:

1. With respect to power in Turkish families, we aim to contribute to answering the question of whether Turkish families residing in the Netherlands are hierarchically structured, authoritarian, and characterized by male dominance, by especial reference not only to behavioural but also to self-report data, and not only to outcome but also to process components of power.
2. With respect to power as a conversational phenomenon, we aim to trace turn-taking patterns that are indicative of power processes, thus contributing to the valid and reliable measurement of conversational power.

2. Data collection

In the present study, a multiple case approach was adopted. Two Turkish families living in the Netherlands were studied in their home environment. The following considerations played a significant role in our decision to adopt a case approach.

First, the details obtained in a case study are invaluable. Second, with a case study it is possible to obtain unobtrusively empirical data on spontaneous everyday family life. This is of particular importance in the situation of minorities: from other research on (sub)cultural differences in socialization it is well-known that socially weak groups react defensively in research situations, which tends to mean that they react according to expectations (e.g. Ginsburg, 1972; Labov, 1972). Third, with a case study, one can study a lot of different settings, e.g. having dinner, playing, drinking tea, or watching television. And finally, with a case approach it is possible to conduct a study of individuals embedded in a social network.

Two Turkish families with extremely different sociological characteristics were selected for study: one was a 'traditional' rural family, the other a more 'open' urban family. The rural family, which originated from a Central-Anatolian village, consisted of a father (a factory labourer unemployed at the time of the study, who had lived in the Netherlands for 14 years), a mother, and four children (a preschooler of six years and three children between 11 and 16 years of age). Both the father's and the mother's education was limited to a few years of primary school. The mother had married when she was 16 years old. Two years later, after

the birth of the eldest daughter, for economic reasons the father emigrated to the Netherlands, returning to spend his holidays in Turkey. After nine years, the mother and the four children moved to the Netherlands. The family was finally united in a three room apartment, located in a mixed-population suburb in a medium-sized Dutch city.

The second family originated from Istanbul, and consisted of a father (employed as a technician, who had lived in the Netherlands for 18 years), a mother, and three daughters of 5, 7, and 16 years. The mother had married when she was 18 years old. Having only completed primary school, she was employed as an unskilled factory worker. Her husband, who had completed the Polytechnic School, found work in the Netherlands six months before their marriage. More than two years later the mother joined her husband in the Netherlands, together with her six-month-old daughter. Eight years later, they purchased a house in a suburb of a medium-sized Dutch city, populated primarily by young Dutch families.

In contrast to the rural family, the urban family enjoyed a rather luxurious life, with an extended social network. The urban family was more oriented towards Dutch society than the rural family, and less concerned with Islamic values, to the extent that the Islamic religion was practised to a much lesser degree in the urban family than in the rural family. The division of tasks between the urban parents seemed to be less traditional in comparison to the rural family, in the sense that the father performed a number of 'care-taking tasks'.

With respect to origin, number of children, and duration of residence in the Netherlands, and taking the sample used by Rişvanoğlu, Brouwer and Priester (1986) as a point of reference, both families can be considered as examples of commonly-found types of immigrant Turkish families.⁴

The research material was collected by means of participant observation. In both families, the investigator was in the house daily for seven weeks from 3:30 p.m. until at least 9:00 p.m. These hours were selected because they contain the evening meal – the 'rush-hour' in family interaction (Weick, 1968) – as well as more quiet periods of interaction. The investigator mainly assisted with household tasks. After a three-week period of mutual habituation, recordings were made of the family's verbal interaction. The recordings were made with a portable cassette recorder positioned as inconspicuously as possible. The approximately six hours of recorded interaction per family which have been transcribed form the empirical basis for the analyses reported here. The material covers a wide range of typical activities and situations in the everyday life of the families (e.g. at mealtimes, during play, while watching TV, preparing meals, drinking coffee or tea, painting the house, quarrelling at times of domestic boredom and of domestic conflict).

The majority of the material collected from the rural family was in Turkish. These sections of the recordings were transcribed by a native speaker of Turkish. In the case of the urban family, most of the material was in Dutch.

Given the limited number of cases involved in the present study, the results

cannot be generalized to 'the typical Turkish migrant family'. Nor was this our intention. However, we were able to carry out one of the aims of the study – the description of power in Turkish families – which can now be described more specifically as the exploration of the range of variation in Turkish family power by analyzing two cases of sociologically-different family types. Our second aim, as stated earlier, is to explore the value of verbal competition as an indicator of power.

Our study of Turkish family interaction takes place in the context of migration of Turkish families to the Netherlands (see section 1). In order to be able to describe the differences between Turkish and Dutch family patterns, we need similar data from Dutch families. These are provided by a previous study (Huls, 1982), which is similar to the current study in design and analysis. It concerns two Dutch families of different social class: one the family of a janitor, the other that of a factory director.

3. *Data analysis*

3.1 TURN-TAKING ANALYSIS

On the basis of existing theories of conversational structure (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974), and in accordance with previous family interaction research by the author (Huls, 1982), a turn-taking analysis was carried out. In particular, the way in which speaker changes occur was examined.

The transcribed material was first segmented into 'turns', broadly defined as what a single speaker says between two moments of keeping silent. The turns were then described in terms of 'speaker' and 'addressee'. The identification of speaker and addressee can be difficult when the material consists of tape recordings from a standard, homogeneous laboratory group. In family interaction, however, one can make use of a relatively large number of cues. In the first place, there are age, sex, and role differences. In the second place, some participants are more likely to be engaged in certain activities and topics than other participants (e.g. shopping, school activities). Thirdly and finally, there are bound to be times when not everybody is present. When the speaker or addressee could not be identified, the code 'unknown' has been used. The reliability of the coding of speaker and addressee has been checked (see 3.2 for results).

The only problem in coding speaker and addressee occurred in the material relating to the urban family, where it was difficult to distinguish between the two younger daughters. However, although our material might contain some errors in this respect, they do not affect the overall conclusions.

The turns were then classified into different kinds:

1. Turns in a narrow sense: contributions in content to the ongoing conversation.
2. Turns that open, stimulate or repair the conversation, without giving a contribution in content:

- 2.1 turns that ask and give permission to speak: so-called pre-starts;
- 2.2 turns that show attention and interest, and stimulate the ongoing conversation (so-called back-channel cues);
- 2.3 turns that repair failed communication: a request for repetition or clarification, and the answer to this request.
3. Vocal, but 'non-verbal' turns (e.g. laughing, screaming, singing, etc.).
4. Failed attempts to gain the floor.

All turns were then coded according to their relation to the previous and subsequent conversations. One can conceive of lots of variations in these respects. For example, a speaker (S) might try to interrupt an ongoing turn of another interaction participant (A), who had just invited a third party (T) to take the floor. If S was invited to take the floor, there would be a 'mitigating' circumstance for the interruption. If, however, someone else had been invited, S would interrupt under 'aggravating' circumstances. Speaker S's attempt can succeed or fail from the beginning. It can introduce a new topic (which in general makes it more disruptive, although one can conceive of urgent circumstances that could mitigate the interruption, such as the milk boiling over) or it can be topically related to the previous discourse. A further possibility is that speaker S only has the floor for a short time, after which A and/or T try to (re)gain it. In that case, A and T would both have mitigating circumstances for their attempts to interrupt S: A has just been interrupted, and so has not yet finished his or her conversational contribution, whereas T was invited to speak but has not had a chance to do so. Thus, every turn exchange is embedded in a large number of contextual factors. In order to describe these turn exchanges in context, patterns such as Figure 1 have been used, in which a speaker (S) interrupts an ongoing turn of participant A, who had already invited a third party (T) to take the floor. S does not introduce a new topic abruptly. Section 3.2 below contains an example from Figure 1 (see numbers 38 and 39), embedded in its verbal and situational context.

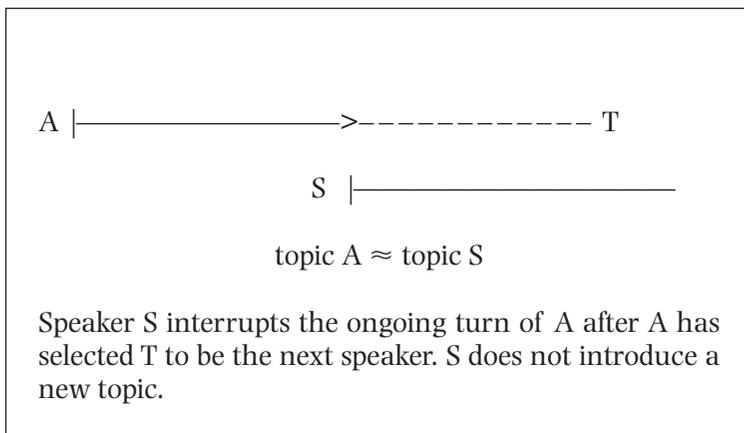


FIGURE 1. *A turn sequence pattern*

The turn-taking patterns used in our study consist of a combination of answers to questions such as:

1. is the turn simultaneous or competitive with another turn?
2. is the turn a response to a preceding addressee term or question, and if so, does the speaker of the turn correspond to that selected by the previous speaker?
3. is the turn acquired by using special techniques for taking the floor, such as the prestart (e.g. *Mom, you know what?*), resulting in an explicit permission to speak?
4. is the topic of the previous turn abruptly eliminated?

Some of the patterns were defined in advance, others were added in response to a turn exchange in the material, resulting in a total of more than a 100 turn-taking patterns. The data collection that has been analyzed with respect to turn-taking amounts to 10,692 turns.

Although the category system used in this turn-taking analysis looks very different from other systems (e.g. Roger, Bull and Smith, 1988; van Lier, 1988), the discrepancy is superficial: our coding system allows for the same, or even more distinctions.

In this article the focus is on competitive turn-taking patterns. Before we treat these in more detail, we will show a longer fragment of the family interaction. While this gives the reader an impression of the intricacies of the material, it also contains a lot of turn-taking phenomena that play a role in the elaboration of the data-analysis in section 3.3.

3.2 AN ILLUSTRATION

In the urban family, Feza (aged 7), her older sister Gülin (aged 16) and the observer Anneke are sitting around the table. Feza is working with her exercise book. Gülin is reading a 'holiday book' which contains fun tasks, drawings, jokes, etc. In the beginning of this fragment Feza tries to solve a task concerning the formation of diminutives in Dutch. This is a morphologically complicated matter: the diminutive affix 'je' is the unmarked form (e.g. hand – *handje*; translated: hand – little hand), but depending on the phonological context, this affix becomes 'tje', 'etje', 'kje' or 'pje' (e.g. pen – *pennetje*; translated: pen – little pen). The five-year-old Niğda is colouring in another part of the room, the mother is moving around, and the father is resting on the bench. The signs '┌' and '└' are used to indicate the start of simultaneous talk.

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Feza | <i>Pen en een pen . . . penne</i> ((pause = 2.4 seconds)). |
| 2 | Feza | <i>Tol en tolle, tolletjes. Bal en een baltjes.</i>
<i>Bel en een beltjes. Z┌zon Belletje. Zon en een zo . . . zonetje.</i> |
| 3 | Gülin | └ <i>Belletje.</i> |
| 4 | Anneke | <i>Hmm.</i> |
| 5 | Feza | <i>En welke moet ik nog lezen?</i> |

- 6 Anneke *Uhm* [m ((thinking about it))
7 Feza [Dit, hè?
8 Anneke *Ja, doe ma* [ar es.
9 Feza [Doe ik maar dit zo meteen. Anders duurt het zo lang.
10 Anneke *Ja, doe dat eerst maar een keer.*
11 Feza *Doen we dit effe* [omslaan, hè?
12 Anneke [Ja.
13 Feza *Ik* [
14 Anneke [Overslaan.
15 Feza *Ja, overslaan. Ik . . . zong, ik zing, ik zang, ik* [
16 Anneke [Nee, wat is de eerste letter? Ik . . .
17 Feza *Hang.*
18 Anneke *Ja.*
19 Feza *Ik hing, ik meng.*
20 Anneke *Ja.*
21 Mother *Battaniyeyi getirdin mi, yavrum, buraya, Gülin?*
22 Gülin *Nee.*
23 Mother *Babaya örtelim. Bak. Uyudu!*
24 Gülin *Getiririm zometeen.*
25 Mother *Nee.*
26 Feza *Ik . . . ik vang, ik ving, ik breng, ik . . . drink, ik hing.*
27 Mother *Çocuklar, gürültü yapmayın! Baba uyuyor, emi?*
28 Feza *Ik denk. Ik bonk. Ik zing. Ik word.*
29 Mother *Sen gürültüde uyayabilicen mi burada?*
30 Gülin *Hé, Anneke, moej's luisteren. ((reads out a joke)) Een hotelgast stapt naar de receptie: 'Wat is dat hier voor een smerige boel? Er zat op'* [
31 Anneke [Wat, wat, wat is dat?
32 Gülin *Voor een smerige boel.*
33 Anneke *Ja.*
34 Gülin *'Er zat op mijn kamer een kakkerlak tegen de muur en even later zag ik er nog een op mijn hoofdkussen.' 'Maakt u zich niet bezorgd', zegt de receptionist, 'Dat was dezelfde kakkerlak. Die gaat altijd een dutje doen.'*
35 Anneke ((laughs))
36 Feza *Ik . . . hakt, ik bid, ik . . . ((pause = 4 seconds) leid.*
37 Anneke *Ja, goed zo.*
38 Feza *Welke zal ik nou* [lezen? Deze of dees?
39 Gülin [Hé, wacht effe. ((reads aloud)) *'Ik heb gezien dat je oma naar de kapper is geweest om haar haren te laten knippen.'* *'Dat klopt. Ze ziet er nu niet meer uit als een oude vrouw,* [maar als een oude man.'
40 Feza [Kijk, Anne [ke.
41 Anneke [Wat? Wat? Ik heb 't niet gehoord, sorry.
42 Gülin *'Ik heb gezien dat je oma naar de kapper is geweest en haar haar heeft laten knippen.'* *'Dat klopt. Ze ziet er nu niet meer uit als een oude vrouw, maar als een oude man.'*
43 Anneke ((laughs))
44 Anneke *Kijken. Wat is dat dan? Wat voor een boekje? ((Gülin shows her the book)) Groot vakantieboek.*
45 Gülin *Hmm.*
46 Anneke [Voor in de auto.
47 Niğda [((Not understandable))

- 48 Mother *Su Koyayım* ((a loud noise)) *Ah! Yavrım. Baba uyuyor!*
 49 Feza *Sorry.* ((pause = 1 second)) *Sorry, papa!*
 50 Niğda *Ik kan mooï kleuren, hè?*
 51 Anneke *Jaa.*
 52 Feza *Appelen. Appeltjes.* ((Feza sees what Niğda is doing. She stops working with her exercise book and starts colouring with Niğda.))

Wrong applications of the diminutive affix have been noted as +WDA, correct applications are noted with +CDA.

- 1 Feza *Pen and a pen . . . pen + WDA* ((pause = 2.4 seconds)).
 2 Feza *Top and top + WDA, top + CDA. Bal and a bal + WDA. Bell and a bell + WDA. S* *sun Bell + CDA. Sun and a su . . . sun + CDA.*
 3 Gülin *Bell + CDA.*
 4 Anneke *Hmm.*
 5 Feza *And which one do I still have to read?*
 6 Anneke *Uhm* *m* ((thinking about it))
 7 Feza *This, isn't it?*
 8 Anneke *Yes, just d* *o it.*
 9 Feza *I am going to do this right away. Otherwise it takes so long.*
 10 Anneke *Yes, do this first just once.*
 11 Feza *Do we* *leave this around for a while, hé?*
 12 Anneke *Yes.*
 13 Feza *I*
 14 Anneke *Leave out.*
 15 Feza *Yes, leave out. I . . . sang, I sing, I sang, I*
 16 Anneke *No, what is the first character? I . . .*
 17 Feza *Hang.*
 18 Anneke *Yes.*
 19 Feza *I hang, I rang.*
 20 Anneke *Yes.*
 21 Mother *Battaniyeyi getirdin mi, yavrım, buraya, Gülin?* ((Have you brought a blanket, dear, here, Gülin?))
 22 Gülin *No.*
 23 Mother *Babaya örtelim. Bak. Uyudu!* ((Let's cover your father. Look. He fell asleep.))
 24 Gülin *Getiririm zometeen.* ((I will bring it right away.))
 25 Mother *No.*
 26 Feza *I . . . I catch, I caught, I bring, I . . . drink, I hung.*
 27 Mother *Çocuklar, gürültü yapmayın! Baba uyuyor, emi?* ((Children, don't make noise! Daddy is asleep, you know?))
 28 Feza *I think. I thump. I sing. I become.*
 29 Mother *Sen gürültüde uyayabilicen mi burada?* ((Can you sleep here with all this noise?))
 30 Gülin *Hé, Anneke, just listen.* ((reads out a joke)) *A hotel guest steps up to the reception desk: 'What is this dirty mess here? I noticed a*
 31 Anneke *What, what, what is this?*
 32 Gülin *Dirty mess.*
 33 Anneke *Yes.*
 34 Gülin *I noticed a cockroach on the wall in my room and a moment later I noticed another one on my pillow.' 'Don't worry', says the man at the desk, 'It was the same cockroach. It always takes a nap.'*

- 35 Anneke ((laughs))
 36 Feza *I . . . cuts, I pray, I . . .* ((pause = 4 seconds) *lead.*
 37 Anneke *Yes, well done.*
 38 Feza *Which one shall I* [read now? *This one or that?*
 39 Gülin [Hey, just wait. ((reads aloud)) *'I see that your granny has
 been to the hairdresser to have a haircut.'* *'Right. She does not look like an old
 woman anymore, [but like an old man.'*
 40 Feza [Look, Anne [ke.
 41 Anneke [What? What? *I didn't hear what you said,
 sorry.*
 42 Gülin *'I see that your granny has been to the hairdresser and had a haircut.'* *'Right.
 She does not look like an old woman anymore, but like an old man.'*
 43 Anneke ((laughs))
 44 Anneke *Let me look. What is this then? What kind of a booky?* ((Gülin shows the
 book)) *Great holiday book.*
 45 Gülin *Hmm.*
 46 Anneke [For in the car.
 47 Niğda [((Not understandable))
 48 Mother *Su Koyayım (Let me put on the kettle) ((a loud noise)) Ah! Yavrum. Baba
 uyuyor! (Ah! Dear. Daddy is asleep).*
 49 Feza *Sorry. ((pause = 1 second)) Sorry, daddy!*
 50 Niğda *I can colour beautifully.*
 51 Anneke *Yees.*
 52 Feza *Apples. Apple + CDA. ((Feza sees what Niğda is doing. She stops working
 with her exercise book and starts colouring with Niğda.))*

3.3 COMPETITION

The notion 'at the cost of' distinguishes the competitive patterns from non-disruptive simultaneity (e.g. the use of back channel cues such as 'yeh' and 'uh-huh' during an ongoing turn (see line 12 in the previous extract) or comments that do not interfere with the ongoing talk). In the case of simultaneous talk, a decision has to be made as to whether one interlocutor realizes his or her conversational contribution at the cost of one or more others, i.e. whether a winner and one or more losers can be identified. In general, we adopted a 'friendly' strategy of interpretation: in case of doubt we chose non-disruptive simultaneity (e.g. lines 7 and 9 in the extract in 3.2). In case of competition, who wins at any given moment is decided according to the following criteria:

1. the utterance of the winner is intelligible, that of the loser is not (e.g. lines 46 and 47 in the extract in 3.2).
2. although the utterance of the loser is intelligible, it is not heard due to other noises.
3. the utterance that needs a continuation (e.g. a question or a suggestion), but does not get it, is the losing utterance (e.g. line 38 in the extract).
4. the utterance of the loser is addressed to the winner, but s/he does not signal comprehension (e.g. line 40 in the extract, followed by Anneke in line 41, who is focused on Gülin).

5. if one of the two utterances is not completed, this is the losing utterance (see lines 2, 13, 15 and 31).
6. if one of the competing utterances is not completed initially, but later, after the competitor has finished the utterance, this is the losing utterance (see lines 2, 13, 15, 30).
7. if one of the competing utterances is repeated when the floor is 'free', this utterance was initially the losing one (there is no clear example in the fragment, although it is reasonable to guess that this happens in lines 47 and 50).

Precedence rules were followed if the different criteria contradicted each other. This means, for example, that the criterion of continuation has priority over the criterion of intelligibility. The extract in section 3.2 contains no examples of contradicting criteria.

Information about the identity of the winners and losers was added to the coding of the turn-taking patterns.

For the analysis of competition, two main types of patterns are relevant, namely interruptions and competitive starts. Interruptions have been defined as attempts to prevent the completion of an ongoing utterance (e.g. line 3), whereas competitive starts refer to occasions when two or more persons start their turns simultaneously, and one of them falls silent (e.g. lines 46 and 47). What interruptions and competitive starts have in common is that there is competition in getting the floor, and that when one of the competitors succeeds at completing his/her turn it is at the cost of the turn of the other(s). They were grouped together in our data analysis, because a high correlation existed between the respective phenomena (the winning chances of individual interaction participants in trials to interrupt were correlated with the winning chances in competitive starts: Pearson $r = .86$; $p < .001$).

In competitive turn-taking patterns, the circumstances under which the competition took place were also specified. Interruptions can occur under both aggravating and mitigating circumstances. An example of an interruption that is undertaken under aggravating circumstances is when speaker S interrupts another speaker A who just asked a third party T to take the floor (see Figure 1 and lines 38 and 39 in the fragment). A second type of interruption that occurs under aggravating circumstances is when the interruptor introduces a new topic of conversation (there is no clear example of this in the fragment). Interruptions are considered to occur under mitigating circumstances when they: (1) answer a question addressed to the interrupter, (2) request repetition or explanation (e.g. line 31), (3) are performed by someone who was interrupted in the previous turn (e.g. line 40), or (4) perform a directive speech act.

Interruptions occurring under aggravating circumstances were considered more disruptive than those occurring under mitigating circumstances. Nevertheless, the classification of interruptive patterns in terms of their relative disruptiveness appeared to have more theoretical than empirical value. The frequency of the mitigating circumstances listed under (1), (2) and (3) above was

negligible; the circumstances listed under (4) mostly concerned interruptions of others by the mothers. Exclusion of the latter type of interruption from the analyses, however, did not affect the distributions found. The conclusion was that the selection of a broad operationalization of competition, which includes interruptions under mitigating circumstances, or a narrow operationalization, which excludes these, does not make any difference. Therefore, the former was opted for.

3.4 RELIABILITY

The reliability of the coding was checked in different ways. Intra-rater reliability was tested by giving a subset of five fragments per family to the original rater to rate again. The fragments were selected randomly. For each family, 400 turns were re-judged. Inter-rater reliability was checked twice. In check 1, the subset described earlier was rated by a second rater whose knowledge of Turkish language and culture was comparable to that of the original rater. Experience with coding systems of these two raters was also comparable. Thus, the reliability of the rating system has been tested. In check 2, a judgement of half of the subset was carried out by a native speaker of Turkish, assisted by a native speaker of Dutch for the clarification of the Dutch parts in the material. In this way the interpretations of the Turkish material were tested.

The reliabilities were calculated in terms of Kappa coefficients (Cohen, 1960). Table 1 gives an overview. These kappa-values are comparable to those found by Stiles (1992). They can be qualified in accordance with Landis and Koch (1977):⁵

- Kappa between 0.40–0.60: ‘moderate’
- Kappa between 0.60–0.80: ‘substantial’
- Kappa between 0.80–0.99: ‘almost perfect’.

We can conclude that the reliabilities of the codings vary from ‘moderate’ to ‘substantial’ to ‘almost perfect’.

TABLE 1. *Reliabilities of the codings (kappa values)*

	<i>intra-rater reliability</i>	<i>inter-rater reliability, check 1</i>	<i>inter-rater reliability, check 2</i>
speaker coding	.98	not computed	.97
addressee coding	.91	not computed	.73
turn-start coding 1)	.84	.98	.67
turn-ending coding 2)	.89	.80	.76
winner coding	.80	.58	.57

(1) turn start = relation of the turn to the previous conversation

(2) turn ending = relation of the turn to the subsequent conversation

3.5 VALIDITY

As stated before (see 1), the validity of the use of verbal competition as an index of power relationships has been firmly disputed. There are a lot of empirical investigations in which interruptions have been found to co-vary with notions closely related to power such as dominance (Kollock, Blumstein and Schwartz, 1985; Roger, 1989; Rogers and Jones, 1975), and status (Eakins and Eakins, 1976; West and Zimmerman, 1977; Zimmerman and West, 1975). However, there are also a lot of studies which argue that interruptions are not a unitary phenomenon (e.g. Beattie, 1981; Hellinger, 1995). More specifically, interruptions have been considered indicative of social relationships or personality variables such as involvement, assertiveness, or cooperativeness (see also Cameron, 1998; Ferguson, 1977; James and Clarke, 1993; Nofsinger, 1991; Olson and Cromwell, 1975b; Tannen, 1984).

The position of this article is that part of the discussion on the social meaning of interruptions can be traced back to the differences in the operationalization of the notion of 'interruption' by different researchers. Ferguson, for example, states that interruptions have a cooperative meaning, but her notion of interruptions is a physical one: the computer decides when a second person 'interrupts' a first one on the basis of vocalizations (these might be back-channel cues or non-interfering turns) of the second one.

In the present research, we assumed simultaneous talk to have different degrees of disruptiveness:

1. simultaneous vocal signals that indicate listening, the so-called back-channel cues, e.g. line 12 in the fragment in section 3.2;
2. simultaneous turns that do not interfere with the ongoing conversation, e.g. lines 7 and 9;
3. competition under mitigating circumstances, e.g. an interruption that provides the answer to an ongoing question, an interruption with a request for explanation and/or repetition (line 31) or an interruption after being interrupted (line 40 is an attempt to interrupt under mitigating circumstances; this attempt, however, fails);
4. competition under normal circumstances, i.e., no mitigating or aggravating circumstances (lines 3, 14, 16);
5. competition under aggravating circumstances, e.g., an interruption that eliminates the ongoing topic or the interruption in Figure 1 and line 39.

The degree of disruptiveness may, for example, reflect involvement when minimal, and dominance when maximal. Although the road is different, the conclusion is the same as that made by Goldberg (1990) and Roger et al. (1988), who developed fine-grained systems for classifying interruptions.

The conflicting results of previous studies might thus be attributed to the fact that the phenomena mentioned under sections 1 and 2 are distinct from those mentioned under sections 3 to 5, the former being indicative of mutual interest, whereas the latter bear a regulative character, because the other interlocutor is

forced to stop talking. The term 'regulative' is sympathetic, but such a sympathetic interpretation of interruptions becomes suspicious when there is a striking asymmetry in the number of winning interruptions. When interactant A systematically and frequently interrupts interactant B, an 'unequal' situation arises in which A controls B, and the conversation between them. A is thereby exerting power (see also Davis, 1988; Hutchby, 1996).⁶

In this study, the analysis of competition concerns the phenomena mentioned under sections 3 to 5. Asymmetries in winning and losing are considered to be especially interesting from the perspective of family power.

Finally, it is important to note that the conversational measurement of power will be validated by comparing the results of the analysis of competition with the mothers' reports about family-decision making (a subjective measurement of outcome components of power) and with observations of real decision-making (a behavioural measurement of outcome components of power). Occasionally, the conclusions will also be validated by means of citations from the transcripts that reflect the family members' views on power relationships.

3.6 CONTROLS FOR EXTRALINGUAL VARIABLES

The data collection lacks the rigorous controls of most laboratory experiments since the researcher did not provide the topics for conversation, the setting, the type of activity, etc. However, controls were made after data collection, rather than before, as is usual in laboratory experiments. The influence of the following extralingual variables has been traced: topic of conversation, type of activity, presence of visitors, language choice and day of recording.

4. Results

Before we turn to the results relating to competition, we need some information on the relative involvement of the different family members in home interactions. This information serves as a reference point – the general context – for the interpretation of the competitive results.

4.1 INVOLVEMENT

In the rural family, the mother takes a central position with 33.8% of the speaking turns. In the urban family, the pre-schooler has a central place, together with her mother (23.8% vs 21.0% of the speaking turns). The position of the rural mother in her family is more central than the urban mother's: the rural mother is involved – as speaker or addressee – in 57.3 percent of the turns, while for the urban mother this percentage only amounts to 41.8 percent.

The Turkish fathers are not very active in family interaction; taking respectively 8.4 percent and 10.0 percent of the total number of turns. In part, this is caused by their frequent absence. If we compare both families when the fathers are present, the rural mother is still more active than the rural father (32.7% vs 20.2%); in the urban family, however, both parents are equally involved.

For the rural family, it is of interest to trace the influence of language choice in relation to involvement: it might be the case that the father's low involvement is related to the fact that the conversation takes place in Dutch, a language which he finds difficult to use. It became apparent that language choice does play a role, but his involvement in Turkish conversation is also clearly less fluent than that of his wife (25.3% vs 38.9%).

In both families the involvement of the pre-schoolers in the family interaction is relatively high compared to that of the older children.

As previously stated, these figures for Turkish families can be compared with the figures in the Dutch families previously studied by Huls (1982), in which the Dutch mothers played a central part (about 34% of the speaking turns). In both Dutch families, the fathers – if they were home – were involved half as much as the mothers.

4.2 COMPETITION

In order to gain insight into competition, we will first look at the relative competition, i.e. the amount of competition per 100 speaking turns. In competitive interaction (e.g. parts of informal political discussions) this relative competition is high (approximately 40%), while in relaxed and casual conversations it is low (approximately 5%). In the rural family, a relative competition of 10.6 percent has been found, while in the urban family the relative competition is 7.4 percent. In comparison with the mean rate of competition in the Dutch family from a higher social class (18.1%), these percentages are low. This indicates that it is relatively easy for Turkish family members to gain access to the conversational floor. A low relative competition (9%) was also found in the Dutch family drawn from a lower social class.

By comparing the different family members in terms of relative competition, we can gain insight into whether some family member(s) is/are more active in competition than others. A person with a high relative competition is profiling him/herself more frequently at the cost of others. In the rural family, the children are somewhat more competitive than the parents. In the urban family, parents and children are similar with respect to relative competition. Both fathers had a remarkably low relative competition (7.5% for the rural and 6.7% for the urban father). This means that they did not try to control the conversational floor when others were active.

Furthermore, in analyzing competition, the chance of winning is relevant. If someone wins 75 competitive situations out of a total of 100, the winning chance is 75 percent. This is a strong position, and other participants in the interaction have to be content with less. In the rural family, the mother takes the lead with a winning chance of 72.0 percent. The older children have a lower chance of winning (about 45%). For the pre-schooler, the chance of winning is not high (35.3%), but the father's chance is remarkably low (25.9%). In the urban family, the mother has the biggest chance of winning (78.4%), but there are a lot of instances where the father wins the competition (65.7%). It might be interesting

to compare these Turkish figures with Dutch ones. In both Dutch families, the mothers had a winning chance of about 70 percent, and the fathers of 50 percent; the older children won about 40 percent of the time, and the pre-schoolers came last with a winning chance of 25 percent.

Finally, it is interesting to look at the competitions that take place between different family members (Tables 2 and 3). In the rural family, asymmetries in winning and losing center around the mother: she wins 12 times from the father, while the father wins just 3 times from her; she wins 29 times from her 16-year old daughter, who wins 12 times from her; etc. The mother is the most powerful family member in every competitive relation. The father does not have a significant edge over his children, just as the older children do not have a clear advantage over the pre-schooler. In the urban family, the competition relationships are characterized by a collective win over the younger children. The relationship between the urban father and mother is symmetrical, as are the relationships between the parents and the eldest daughter. Dutch data can serve as a point of reference for the interpretation of these Turkish results: in both Dutch families, the competition relationships show a social status hierarchy, with parents winning more often from their children and fathers functioning as 'second in command' to their wives.

Of course, one might argue that the amount of competition and the winning chances of an individual are related to extralingual variables, such as topic of

TABLE 2. *The network of competition in the rural family*

	<i>Loser</i>							<i>Total wins</i>	
	<i>mo</i>	<i>fa</i>	<i>16y</i>	<i>13y</i>	<i>11y</i>	<i>6y</i>	<i>obs</i>		<i>o/u</i>
Winner									
mother		12	29	10	12	25	6	1	95
father	3			2		1	1		7
16 yrs. ♀	12	2		3	4	2	2		25
13 yrs. ♂	7	2	3		1	7	2		22
11 yrs. ♀	5		4	5		8	5	2	29
6 yrs. ♂	5	3	1	2	8		4	1	24
observer	5	1	4	3	2	1			16
others/ unknown								9	9
Total losses	37	20	41	25	27	44	20	13	227

TABLE 3. *The network of competition in the urban family*

	Loser							Total wins
	<i>mo</i>	<i>fa</i>	<i>16y</i>	<i>7y</i>	<i>5y</i>	<i>obs</i>	<i>o/u</i>	
Winner								
mother		4	5	12	27	5	5	58
father	4		3	6	6	1	1	21
16 yrs. ♀	4	1		4	7	1	2	19
7 yrs. ♀	4	1	1		14	5		25
5 yrs. ♀	3	1	2	8		3	2	19
observer	1	4	1	4	4			14
others/ unknown			2	1	1		18	22
Total losses	16	11	14	35	59	15	28	178

conversation and language choice (see 3.4). We tried to analyse the influence of these variables, but the results cannot be presented for every participant in the interaction. When we focus on the competitive behaviour of the fathers, two specific points are worth mentioning. First, we checked the supposition that the rural father's bad position in competition should be attributed to language choice: his low language proficiency in Dutch might have a negative influence on how much he competed, and his winning chances when the conversation was in Dutch. However, this supposition proved to be untrue: in the Turkish network of competition he had no disadvantage in language proficiency, but his winning chance was just as low (27.2%). We also tried to assess whether the low winning chances of the Turkish fathers were related to the topics of the conversation. One can imagine that the fathers become winners when they were really interested in the topics of conversation. In that case, the limited interest shown by the fathers in family affairs would be the context for the relatively powerful position of the mothers.⁷ A comparison of the fathers' winning chances in conversations on topics that interested them with their winning chances in the rest of the conversation might be revealing here. However, this comparison failed because frequencies of competition were too low in the Turkish families. In the Dutch families previously studied by Huls (1982), the winning chances of the fathers were equal to those of the mothers when the topic was interesting to the fathers. However, the amount of conversation on topics that interested the fathers was also limited in these families. Although the data do not allow for firm conclusions, there is an

indication that the kind of topic influences the winning chances of the fathers in the families, and that most of the topics do not induce the fathers to dominate verbal competition.

With respect to the other analyses of extralingual variables, only the general conclusion is given here: competition fluctuates in relation to these extralingual variables, but this fluctuation is not strong enough to invalidate the comparison of the families or the different family members.

In summary, the overall rates of competition are low in Turkish families. No male dominance was found. In the rural family, the mother has a central position, while the father's position is marginal. In the urban family, the parents are equal to each other. The winning chances of both pre-schoolers are low, especially in competition with their mothers. In the Turkish urban family, age differences generate power differences. In the rural family the children are rather well matched. Turkish families are not more hierarchical or 'patriarchal' than Dutch families.

Self-report data from the two Turkish mothers on family decision-making fit into the picture sketched earlier. The essence of the urban mother's response to the question 'who has the most "say" in your family?' was that she and her husband make all decisions together. By this, she means decisions relating to domestic and social matters. The thread running through the rural mother's answers, on the other hand, appears to be that her husband does not participate in family decision-making. Thus, the self-report data on power are consistent with the observational data.

The observational data of decision-making complete the picture that has been sketched so far. A few examples will suffice. When they could afford to make a large expenditure, the wishes of the father and the mother in the rural family diverged. Father had a preference for a new TV, the mother wanted a furnace. Mother's preference won. When, in the urban family, a conflict arose about the prospective marriage of the eldest daughter, it was not the father who took the decision; instead, the wishes of both the daughter and the mother were respected (and realized). With respect to the balance of power in the rural family, it was particularly illuminating to find that while father likes smoking, the mother – together with the children – decided that he may only smoke on the balcony.

A third type of validation of the conclusions comes from the transcripts. In the words of the rural mother, the power relationship works as follows: *I am the boss. My husband is the şef*. She uses the Turkish word *şef*, which means chief (borrowed from French: *chef*) to denote the position of her husband. The children assess the balance of power in the family by saying that *Mother is the main computer*.

We can conclude that the conversational measurement of power is completed and validated by data from several different perspectives.

5. Discussion

In the light of the stereotype that Turkish families are rigid, hierarchical networks of patriarchal authority, the findings of this study are remarkable. The stereotype

suggests a relatively large power imbalance between the Turkish father and other members of the family, but our findings suggest that this is not the case. Several explanations are conceivable for this discrepancy. First, it is possible that a process approach to family power taps into a different reality, and thus yields different findings than those found by Turkish family sociologists on the basis of a power outcome approach (see Section 1). In the present study, however, we used self-report and behavioural data on decision-making outcomes in addition to observational data on verbal power processes. All types of data appeared to be consistent with each other, reducing the likelihood of this explanation.

Second, one may speculate that the Turkish families involved in this study are somehow 'atypical'. Although statistically we cannot exclude this possibility, we did not find any indications for this. Both families appear to be common types of Turkish migrant families (see Section 2), and – as far as we, the Turkish co-worker in the project included, could observe – they both fit the picture of other Turkish families living in their social environment. Further, a questionnaire study that has been conducted by the present author and that touched upon the formulation of directives, showed that the two mothers who took part in this study were not deviant from the other 19 respondents.

A third and final possibility is that the image of Turkish families – although based on research findings – is too global and static in relation to the radically changing patterns in Turkish families in recent years, especially migrant families. According to a large-scale project of Timur (1978), 60 percent of the Turkish families have a nuclear structure, and 19 percent are 'patriarchally extended'. This last type is quite commonly found in rural areas, but not in every layer of the population: only members of the ruling class can afford an extended family. Thus, the overwhelming majority of Turkish families that have migrated to the Netherlands do not stem from a patriarchal tradition, in the sense of a father who rules over his sons and their wives and children. Kıray (1976b) and Abadan-Unat (1986) describe how family life in Turkey is changing, with the wife increasingly becoming the pivot in the family. Kağıtçıbaşı (1982) also writes that Turkish family patterns are changing rapidly and that it is difficult to construct a general picture from the kaleidoscopic differentiation she observes.

It is also becoming apparent from the literature that migration – both inside Turkey, as well as to Western Europe – leaves its traces on family relations (Abadan-Unat, 1981). Most of the time, the father migrates first, leaving the mother to keep the family going. As it becomes her responsibility to take decisions, she gradually achieves a position of relative independence. One phenomenon that often goes together with migration, and which might affect rural families in particular, is family fragmentation. The lack of involvement of the father may well be a result of his being away from home for many years. His absence may have led to a kind of communication breakdown. This, in turn, may be the cause of his peripheral position in the family's power structure.

In the case of the Turkish urban family, although no family fragmentation has occurred, social relations may also have been affected by migration. This family

left Turkey when family relations were no longer stable. The parents of this family are strongly oriented towards Western values and norms. They have lived in the Netherlands for a long time, and this may have resulted in their adopting behaviour that they consider to be representative of modern 'Western' life.

In our view, the latter explanation is most plausible. It is also congruent with the finding that migration causes changes in traditional decision-making and authority patterns (Abadan-Unat, 1982; Abadan-Unat et al., 1975; Kiray, 1976a; Kudat, 1975). Empirical support for concluding that power in Turkish immigrant families is no longer reserved for the male head of the family is also provided by a large-scale study conducted among 100 Turkish families living in the Netherlands (Riřvanođlu, Brouwer and Priester, 1986: 167). On the basis of interview data, the authors conclude that 'although the stereotype would suggest that in most families authority is represented by the father, this appears to be the case in somewhat less than half of the families'.

Perhaps one should distinguish between status and power in the case of Turkish migrant families, as suggested by Fiřek (personal correspondence). In most human interactions, the two can't be separated – a person who has one is likely to have the other – (Henley, 1977). However, our observations support Fiřek's view and, in the case of the Turkish immigrant family call for a dissociation of the two terms. In the Turkish rural family, for example, there are several indications that the father has the highest status: on the streets he walks in front of the family, he gets the biggest piece of meat at dinner, etc. Nevertheless, this does not imply that he is also the most powerful member of the family. The position of the rural father resembles Henley's (1977: 20) description of 'an impoverished English lord (who) "commands" a certain respect locally, though he can no longer "literally" command services'. Part of the stereotype of Turkish families may be based on outwardly visible signs of status, which are interpreted as power-related. As can be seen, however, in this case, to equate the two would be incorrect.

NOTES

1. This research was supported by the Foundation for Linguistic Research, which is funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). It was carried out in collaboration with A. van de Mond, A. Söylemez and W. van den Munkhof. I am very grateful for their contributions. Further thanks are due to M.A. van 't Hof for his contribution to the quantitative analysis of the material.
2. A field in which power processes have received relatively more attention is that of psychopathology and the family (for example, Richter, 1970; for a review, see Hadley and Jacob, 1973).
3. Although 'power' can be conceptualized in a lot of different ways, it is commonly agreed that it has to do with 'the ability to change or control the behavior of others' (Blalock and Wilken, 1979). As a general point of departure for our analysis, we accept the definition of power offered by the American political scientist Dahl (1957), who claims that 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'. A and B can be defined as any type of social actor (individual,

group, or organization). Dahl's definition points to an important characteristic of power, namely that all power is relational, or in other words, that power exists within the relationship between social actors rather than residing within the actors themselves.

In a systems elaboration of the concept of power, the notion of alternatives is important (De Sitter, 1974; Fruytier, 1994; Luhmann, 1984). A is exerting power if s/he restricts the alternative courses of action of B. In other words, if A had no power, B would have had more alternatives, but A limits these alternatives by at least one.

This general conceptualization of power can be applied to conversation. The conversational floor is a rare phenomenon. Basically, it does not work when all participants in interaction talk simultaneously (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). Although, empirically, simultaneous talk is possible, it can only take place within certain limits (for example, for a short time and/or when the content is highly predictable and/or irrelevant). This simultaneity does not invalidate the basic claims of Sacks et al. (1974) that everyday conversation is regulated by the principle of one speaker at a time, and that the participants in conversations are oriented towards this principle. Thus, the participants in a conversation have to divide the floor. Their conversational alternatives are restricted at any given moment: either they talk or they remain silent, and if one of two interaction participants talks, the other keeps silent. (Of course, being silent can cover a lot of different behaviours, but, assuming that this is equally true for A and B, it does not unequally influence their respective number of alternatives and/or their respective power positions, and thus is not relevant here.) If two interaction participants, A and B, want to say something simultaneously, both can try to gain the floor. One of them (let's suppose B) will stop talking while the other (A) continues. In this situation, B's number of alternatives is more limited than A's. In the course of time, if they change positions in competition regularly, the relationship between A and B can be even, i.e. if B continues talking just as often as A, and A stops talking just as often as B. However, if it is overwhelmingly the case that A continues and B stops, the relationship between A and B is asymmetrical, and A exerts power over B in the sense that A restricts the alternatives of B even in the face of resistance from B.

Of course, B is not a powerless victim in this process. S/he can try to restrict the alternatives of A in other aspects of behaviour, and hence gain power in those aspects. The power in a social system is not a zero-sum phenomenon (Lammers, 1983), since, if the system has many uncertainties, each with a lot of alternatives, there are many possibilities for exerting power: 'the house of power proves to have many rooms' (Komter, 1992: 20). Nevertheless, it is argued here that conversational competition is one of these rooms.

4. This is the most recent large-scale study of Turkish families residing in the Netherlands.
5. Fleiss (1981) proposes a similar qualification. He characterizes kappas of .40 to .60 as fair, .60 to .75 as good, and over .75 as excellent. Bakeman and Gottman (1986: 82), however, are more cautious: 'Our own inclination, based on using kappa with a number of different coding schemes, is to regard kappas less than .7, even when significant, with some concern, but this is only an informal rule of thumb.'
6. It is not necessarily the case that A intends to exert power, nor that B experiences being dominated (cf. Bilmes, 1997, who advocates a different, more emic analysis of interruptions). In our material, A and B are seldom aware that competition takes place. The power process that we try to trace is a process that, in terms of Gramsci (1971) and Lukes (1974), can be classified as 'hidden'.

Nor is it necessarily the case that A's competitive winning should be morally rejected.

Especially in the interaction between carers and children, a lot of the winning interruptions and simultaneous starts done by the carers have a supportive rather than a restrictive meaning. For example, in argumentative discourse, the care taker can stimulate the child in the direction of smart and witty reasoning by the interruption of too simple and/or repetitive arguments (see Huls, 1982). Examples of interruptions with a supportive intent can also be found in the fragment in section 3.2: seven-year old Feza is interrupted by her 16-year-old sister when she is applying the rule for the formation of diminutives in Dutch incorrectly (lines 1–3); she is also interrupted by the observer when she makes a wrong lexical choice (lines 11 to 14) and when she misreads (lines 15–16). These interruptions are done for the benefit of the interruptee. They show that the winning of verbal competitions can have more than one meaning. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that large asymmetries in these supportive winnings can be interpreted as establishing a power position for the winner, A: it is A who opens routes for B – rather than B for A – and it is A who guides B into directions preferred by A – more than B guides A.

This treatment of the notion 'support' as related to, but distinct from 'power' is consistent with sociological and social-psychological research on families (Rollins and Thomas, 1979). The notion 'support' is used to refer to individual behaviour. The notion 'power', however, is distinctly different, because 'power' is not considered to be a behavioural characteristic of an individual, but an aspect of a relationship (see also note 3).

7. Depending on the appreciation that the mothers have for this limited interest of the fathers in domestic affairs, this interest defines the boundaries of maternal power. The four families that have been studied differ in this respect. In the lower class family, the father's lack of interest in domestic affairs is not appreciated by the mother, who feels that she alone carries the burden of the household and care-taking tasks; in the higher class family, the father's lack of interest corresponds to the mother's wishes: the mother considers and wants family life to be her domain. In the rural family, the mother does not object to the father's marginal interest. In the urban family, the status quo appears to be a joint decision.

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