

**Title:**

**Should police negotiators ask to ‘talk’ or ‘speak’ to persons in crisis? Word selection and overcoming resistance to dialogue proposals**

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# Should police negotiators ask to ‘talk’ or ‘speak’ to persons in crisis? Word selection and overcoming resistance to dialogue proposals

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores whether and how word selection makes some proposals easier to resist than others. Fourteen cases (31 hours) of UK-based police crisis negotiation were analysed exploring (i) how negotiators use the verbs *talk* or *speak* when proposing ‘dialogue’, and (ii) to what extent the strength of persons in crisis’ resistance towards the proposals may be attributed to this word selection. We found that persons in crisis were more likely to overtly reject proposals formulated with *talk* compared to *speak*. And while negotiators used both *talk/speak* when proposing dialogue, negotiators and persons in crisis associated *talk* with more evaluative stances towards dialogue compared to *speak*. This paper has implications for the study of word selection in interaction and for crisis negotiation and other professions where ‘talk’ is promoted as the solution.

Data in British English.

*Keywords:* negotiation, conversation analysis, verbs, word selection, resistance, proposals.

## Introduction

This paper examines police crisis negotiations with persons in crisis, specifically individuals who threaten suicide. A particular problem that negotiators face in these encounters is that a person in crisis often resists or rejects engaging in *dialogue* – the very resource that negotiators are trained to use in order to resolve the crisis (Strentz, 2012). Crisis negotiators face various forms of resistance, ranging from continued silence/disengagement to overt rejections or efforts to undermine dialogue.

Let us start with an example. Extract 1a represents an overt, explicit form of resistance following the negotiator’s proposal to initiate dialogue – henceforth a *dialogue proposal*. The negotiator (N) has telephoned the person in crisis (PiC), who is barricaded inside his flat threatening to shoot himself and anyone who intervenes. All data in this paper are pseudonymised.

Extract 1a. HN24\_7 [2:11]

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01   N:      Kevin, I need to:: try and find a way. to get you those
02           cigarettes.=In the meantime, Can we talk about how you are.
03           (0.5)
04   PiC:   No:, I don't want to ta:lk,
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Following a demand from PiC to be given some cigarettes, N defers their delivery and proposes that, in the meantime, they *talk* (line 2). PiC rejects N’s proposal in an outright and explicit manner: with the negative format ‘I don’t want to talk’, containing a hyper-articulated production of the verb *talk*, he accentuates his unwillingness to engage in dialogue as proposed by the negotiator.

Early observations suggested that dialogue proposals with the verb *speak* were associated with less overt forms of resistance than those with the verb *talk*. As a case in point, Extract 2 starts with N’s reassurance that the immigration office will meet with PiC regarding

a recent letter he has received to leave the country (line 1), followed by a request for PiC to start a conversation with him.

Extract 2. HN34\_1 [12:20]

01 N: Immigration will do that Mosi.  
02 (0.2)  
03 N: Come and speak to me over he:re.  
04 (1.9)  
05 ((N proceeds with a series of first action requests))

As we often found in these data, first and subsequent actions are followed by silence and/or noncompliance. In Extract 2, although the interactions are audio-recorded only by police, the negotiator's continued request for PiC to move towards them (beyond line 4) is evidence that PiC does not comply. Unlike Extract 1, however, there is no explicit form of resistance (e.g., at line 4) from PiC following N's request.

In this paper, we focus on word selection (i.e., *talk* or *speak*) and its consequence in proposal sequences. We explore, first, how negotiators use the verbs *talk* and *speak* to build dialogue proposals. Second, we analyse responses to dialogue proposals that range from resistance (i.e., silence, verbal disalignment and explicit rejection) to engagement (i.e., verbal alignment), and how these distribute according to the negotiator's use of *talk* or *speak* in initiating proposals. Finally, we show that resistant responses to *talk* (but not *speak*) also carry an evaluative stance toward the activity the verb connotes, which has implications for how persons in crisis resist dialogue and the negotiation more generally.

While researchers have previously described different forms of resistance in terms of how 'passive' or 'active' they are – and shown how this matters to the ensuing interaction (e.g., Ekberg & LeCouteur, 2015; Muntigl, 2013; Stivers, 2005), we know less about how more active, explicit and escalated forms of resistance come about in the first place, and how resistance strength might be systematically tied to word selection. We will demonstrate how word selection is not only systematic but also consequential to the interactional unfolding of the negotiations, including how negotiators productively minimize the extent to which people in crisis reject, or disengage with, the negotiation. We proceed by reviewing conversation analytic research on proposals, and resistance, to provide a framework for distinguishing types of resistance towards the dialogue proposals we examine. We also review previous accounts on uses of the verbs *talk* and *speak* in English spoken interaction.

### Proposals and word selection

In conversation analytic research, proposals are generally associated with actions that invite a recipient's involvement rather than presuppose it (Stivers & Sidnell, 2016). As such, proposals are routinely treated as contingent on the recipient's approval (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012), a feature which is also observably relevant in our data, in which crisis negotiators attempt to initiate dialogue with a person in crisis. Proposals have been associated with a range of linguistic formats, such as invitations, requests and directives, used to suggest a (future) solution to a (past/current) problem (Asmuß & Oshima, 2012; Maynard, 1984). In this study, we also define dialogue proposals in broad terms, as a 'family' of actions and formats (cf. Couper-Kuhlen, 2012), all of which represent an effort on the negotiator's behalf to initiate dialogue with the person in crisis.

Empirical studies of interaction may reveal how speakers systematically select one word over another, often semantically related, when building actions in talk (e.g., Schegloff, 2007). Word selection is central to recipient design, and can be observably tied to what co-participants might or might not know – for example, when referring to persons or places

(Heritage, 2007), or when using specialist vocabularies which might (not) go beyond a co-participant's territory of expertise (Kitzinger & Mandelbaum, 2013). To the best of our knowledge, however, there has been no systematic study of word selection in proposal sequences, although Lindström and Weatherall (2015), in their study of treatment proposals in physician encounters, argue that word selection "is an established practice for building intersubjectivity between professionals and their clients" (p. 49). They showed, as part of their analysis, how medics use non-medical terms when a formulation of proposed treatment is designed for a recipient with little expert knowledge.

Across studies, we find close scrutiny of how participants themselves treat word selection as relevant to the action they are building; for example, in instances of self-repair, in which a current speaker changes what they were going to say during the course of their turns (Schegloff, 1979). The process of self-initiated self-repair shows that word selection matters to people, and conversation analysts and discursive psychologists have long since shown that and how speakers select words precisely, not randomly (e.g., Edwards, 2005; Potter & Hepburn, 2003), fitted to the action underway. But while we can demonstrate how word selection is treated as interactionally relevant to individual sequences of talk, via for example self-repair, fewer studies examine systematically how word selection may be tied consequentially to what happens in a next, responsive turn.

### Uses of *talk* and *speak*

In spoken and written English, numerous verbs are available to formulate 'dialogue', including *chat* and *discuss*, in addition to *talk* and *speak*. However, only the latter two were used in the dialogue proposals in our data, which we analyse and compare in this paper. There is a limited but informative body of research that compares *talk* and *speak* in spoken interaction. For instance, in corpus linguistics, comparisons between *talk* and *speak* inform second language teaching (Römer, 2009). Bartsch (2004) argues that since both (as verbs) *speak* and *talk* denote the action of verbal communication, and share the general meaning to 'say or communicate verbally', there is only a subtle meaning distinction between the two. However, "they differ in that the former [speak] denotes a directed process of linguistic utterance involving a speaker making statements, whereas the latter has as its central meaning a process involving conversation between two or more participants" (pp. 23-24). Tanaka (2012) similarly highlight the semantics of *speak* as emitting language sounds, carrying a sense of one-way direction; *talk* emphasises a two-way interaction. Tanaka argues that such semantic differences are the basis for idiomatic expressions such as 'money talks' (and not 'money speaks'): money is inanimate and does not emit linguistic sounds yet may take part in a 'conversation'.

By considering idiomatic uses of *talk* and *speak*, it appears that *talk* indexes the *relevance* of a proposal more strongly than *speak*. For example, formulations such as 'we need to talk about X' frame *talk* as something important; bringing to the surface a previously unaddressed issue. Meanwhile, there is a multitude of examples of how people *separate* talk from action (e.g., 'this is just talk, not action'), highlighting the *irrelevance* of talk. 'Talk' is the subject of hundreds of idioms and proverbs: we 'talk the talk', 'talk is cheap', and we 'talk a mile a minute'. To 'talk the talk', first used in 1906, is usually contrasted with 'to walk the walk'. The words of someone who 'talks the talk' are just rhetoric and without substance; someone who 'walks the walk' supports their rhetoric with action. Likewise, the American proverb, 'talk is cheap' is "used for saying that you do not believe that someone will in fact

do what they are saying they will do.”<sup>1</sup> While there are also related idioms in English containing *speaking*, such as ‘actions speak louder than words’, the contrast is not based on speaking as such but rather on the lexical carriers of proposed *non-action* (that is, ‘words’).

One of the most comprehensive studies which explores the specific semantic distribution of *speaking* and *talk* is a corpus-based investigation of the verbs *speaking*, *talk*, *say* and *tell* (Dirven, Goossens, Putseys, & Vorlat, 1982). The authors showed that *talk* tends to frame the speaker as an interactor and refers to extended discourse, whereas *speaking* focuses more on the speaker, a single utterance, or the physical aspect of speaking or being able to speak. The verb *talk* was associated with excessiveness (‘talking, talking, talking all the time’), a type of assessment which is not typically found with the verb *speaking*. While there are many semantic contrasts between *talk* and *speaking*, they are also used more or less synonymously, such as in proposals like ‘I want to speak/talk to you’ (Tanaka, 2012). What constitutes ‘more or less’ requires further empirical scrutiny: while corpus linguistics make use of frequency data (‘how often does X happen?’), dispersion (‘in what contexts does X occur?’) and the semantic grouping of verbs (Gries & Ellis, 2015), we have little knowledge of how words are embedded, and distribute, with conversational actions such as proposals. Even more crucially, we do not know whether word selection impacts local outcomes (e.g., the acceptability of a proposal).

A handful of other studies suggest that the precise verb used in proposals may be consequential for their acceptance, resistance or rejection. For example, Stokoe and Edwards (2009), in their study of prospective clients talking to community mediation services about neighbour disputes, showed how clients resisted the prospect of mediation by formulating the other party as ‘the kind of person you can’t talk to’. Here, ‘talk’ (and not ‘speak’) represents an activity relevant to proceeding with a talk-based service, rejected on the basis of another’s negative character rather than one’s own willingness (see also Stokoe, 2013). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no systematic study of the actions done by *talk* and *speaking*. There is, however, a growing body of conversation analytic studies on dealing with strong forms of resistance, following a proposal. While none of these studies focus on crisis negotiations, we turn to consider them now as they shape the framework for our research, and our contribution to the wider literature.

### **Overt resistance towards a proposed activity**

A growing body of conversation analytic research already examines the way people resist the actions of co-participants, including proposals, especially in health-related contexts involving proposed recommendations for future treatment (Koenig, 2011; Muntigl, 2013; Stivers, 2005). Generally, the extent to which a recipient resists a proposal is evidenced in the immediate response. In particular, a lack of affiliative turn design components, such as delay followed by quietly-produced acceptance tokens, can project an upcoming disagreement (Asmuß & Oshima, 2012). Delayed responses and weak acceptances represent more passive forms of resistance, which may or may not transform into more active forms of resistance (Stivers, 2005). Koenig (2011) shows how patients withhold accepting a doctor’s proposed recommendation, thereby enacting rights to actively negotiate and endorse the proposal in their own terms. The patients withhold acceptance using classic features of dispreferred responses, including delay and weak forms of acceptance (e.g., ‘mhm’). Koenig shows how patients “manipulate the sequential structure of the visit to postpone acceptance until their treatment preferences and concerns are satisfied.” (p. 1110). He describes this process in

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest date for publication of the phrase “talk is cheap” is found in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on November 21, 1891. <https://idiomation.wordpress.com/>

terms of resistance and identifies turn-by-turn shifts from passive forms of resistance (delays, weak acceptances) to more active, overt forms of resistance to negotiate the proposed recommendation. Overall, active forms of resistance include actions that ‘question and challenge’ recommendations (Stivers 2005, p. 2).

Koenig (2011) contributes to an evolving body of research about how people resist proposals for a future course of action (Ekberg & LeCouteur, 2015; Muntigl, 2013; Stivers, 2005; Waring, 2005). Such ‘remote’ proposals, whether they involve a recommendation (Koenig, 2011), a work plan (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012) or a plea-bargaining (Maynard, 1984), have been distinguished from more ‘immediate’ proposals, where the proposal projects fulfilment in the here and now (e.g., Asmuß & Oshima, 2012), thus not temporally divorced from actually performing the proposed activity. The dialogue proposals in our data represent both remote (‘distal’) and immediate (‘proximal’) proposals, the former typically involving a third party, and the latter involving the co-present negotiator(s). In this study, while presenting distributional aspects of *talk/speak* according to distal and proximal proposals, we focus on the more proximal proposals when examining the persons in crisis’s responses.

There is relatively little research on strong explicit resistance, which may reflect the fact that human interaction maximizes social solidarity (Clayman, 2002). However, our work aligns with Heritage and Sefi’s (1992) argument that the underlying assumptions of advice-givers as knowledgeable implies the opposite for advice-recipients, leading to ‘interactional asymmetry’ (Jefferson & Lee, 1981). Generally, “responses to advice-giving are fundamentally conditioned by the underlying social motivations that inform the interactants’ reasons for participating in the first place” (Heritage & Lindström 2012, p. 190). Thus, a distinction emerges between ‘clients’ who have themselves initiated an encounter and those who have not. For this reason, calls to suicide helplines, for example, may be associated with less advice resistance than in unsought crisis negotiation. To date, we know more about helpline calls than crisis negotiations. However, previous research on help resistance (e.g., Sacks, 1966, 1992; te Molder, 2005) raises key questions for our setting: interventions in crisis negotiations in which suicidal persons have expressed an intention to ‘do it’. Importantly, individuals in crisis have not sought help; negotiators are accountable for approaching *them*. Accordingly, we may expect that persons in crisis resist the negotiation by marshalling their epistemic and deontic rights (e.g., Ekberg & LeCouteur, 2015), but may also resist, or reject, the negotiator’s presence and purpose in the first place. While some studies report clients’ passive or active resistance to interaction in settings such as psychotherapy (e.g., Ekberg & LeCouteur, 2015; Muntigl, 2013; Vehviläinen, 2008; Weiste, 2015), the client, while not directly aligned or affiliated with the therapist, may nevertheless engage with the therapeutic endeavour (e.g., by elaborating on an interpretation: Peräkylä 2004). In crisis negotiations involving suicidal persons, we observed low levels of engagement from the start.

To conclude, while conversation analysts have contributed to our understanding of different types of resistance (Stivers 2005), and some of their consequences for the next turn (Couper-Kuhlen 2012; Muntigl 2013; Stevanovic 2015), we know less about the association between word selection in proposals and their uptake in a next turn. Word selection may play an important role in how crisis negotiators deal with or pre-empt overt resistance. Therefore, this study also has implications for the training of crisis negotiators.

## Data and method

We analysed fourteen cases of audio-recorded crisis negotiation totalling 31 hours. Data were collected and provided by a UK police hostage and crisis negotiation unit as part of routine practice (that is, not for research in the first instance, and no video-recordings were made). We were granted permission by the hostage and crisis negotiation unit, and by ANONYMISED University's Ethics Approval (Human Participants) Sub-Committee, to evaluate the data in line with standard ethical practice when using recorded conversational data (Speer & Stokoe, 2014).

Crisis negotiators are specially trained police officers (see e.g., McMains & Mullins, 2014). The negotiation is led by a team of negotiators, of which the primary negotiator engages directly with the person in crisis. Each case in our data had a different primary negotiator. The negotiations happened in many configurations: the person in crisis is barricaded inside a building or on a roof; conducted over the telephone or 'face to face', sometimes at some physical distance. Twelve cases ended 'successfully': the person in crisis eventually comes down or away from a precarious position. One case ended fatally, and one with injury.

We used conversation analysis to explore how the verbs *talk* and *speak* are associated with negotiators' dialogue proposals, and to persons in crisis' responses to these proposals. To address these questions, we identified and coded all cases of dialogue proposals involving the verbs *talk* or *speak* in the material. A negotiator may initiate a dialogue proposal with, say, a directive form "come back and talk to me", a request form "can we talk", or a proposal form "I'm gonna try and talk to you". Compared to alternative 'family' definitions (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012), including 'directives' or 'instructions', we argue that the term 'dialogue proposals' aptly captures a (proposed) future activity which requires another participant's co-participation in negotiations, although some of the 'dialogue proposals' indeed take directive forms.

We identified a total of 360 dialogue proposals with the verbs *talk* or *speak* in our data. We distinguished and coded whether these were made on behalf of the negotiator or on behalf of a third party, and we used codes to categorize the responses to the dialogue proposals. The codes were (i) verbal alignment: the dialogue proposal gets a verbal response, and this response is fitted as an answer and does not disalign (i.e., halt the further progress of the sequence); (ii) verbal disalignment: the dialogue proposal gets a verbal response, and this response is not fitted as an answer that further progresses the sequence; (iii) explicit rejection: the response rejects the dialogue proposal in an explicit way; (iv) silence: the dialogue proposal gets no verbal response. A response was coded as 'verbal' if (a) there was some form of audible sound production, 'lexical' (including acknowledgment tokens) or 'non-lexical', that could be treated as responsive to the dialogue proposal, *and* (b) it followed in the next turn-space or during/following a single next-turn pursuit of the initial dialogue proposal. Otherwise responses were coded as silence. The relevant cases were identified and coded by one author, then a random sample of 100 (28%) cases were re-labelled by the second author. We then calculated the inter-rater reliability score using the Kappa score for nominal scores (Landis & Koch, 1977), for each response category. The Kappa scores varied between 0.75 and 0.97, which is considered high agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

In line with CA methodology, our analysis is guided by an incremental process of phenomenon and hypothesis-formation rather than hypothetico-deductive research design. As part of this process, we supplement our analysis with statistical evidence, in particular chi-squared tests for independence, to test whether two or more categories are related in statistical terms. We include these tests to further support our claims to distributional relationships in the data.

## Analysis

We present our findings across three sections of analysis: In the first section, we explore how negotiators use the verbs *talk* and *speak* to build dialogue proposals, based on a case-by-case analysis and overall distribution. In the second section, we explore the person in crisis's responses to dialogue proposals. Starting with the overall distribution of the different response categories (i.e., verbal alignment, silence, verbal disalignment, explicit rejection), we show how these distribute according to the negotiator's use of *talk* or *speak* in the preceding dialogue proposal. We then provide a case-by-case analysis of the different response categories. Finally, in the third section, we provide further cases to show how *talk* is associated with more evaluative stances towards dialogue, compared to *speak* – and how this has implications for the negotiation.

### How negotiators build dialogue proposals using *talk* and *speak*

Negotiators first propose dialogue in the opening stages of the interaction, when they telephone the PiC or arrive at the scene. Negotiators propose dialogue early on to account for their emerging presence, which we will show also serves as strategy to distinguish themselves from other police. In Extract 3, N introduces himself to the PiC, who is located on a roof top. They communicate via mobile phones.

#### Extract 3. HN34\_1 [6:58]

01 PiC: Hello.  
02 N: Mosi my n- my name is Riley.  
03 (0.8)  
04 N: Can we talk,  
05 (1.5)  
06 PiC: Who's that,  
07 (0.8)  
08 N: My- my name is Riley=I just want to talk to you.  
09 (0.9)  
10 PiC: Who are you.  
11 (1.0)  
12 N: I'm with the polic:e.=But I want to talk  
13 to you.=Try and help you.  
14 (2.0)

Following PiC's summons response in line 1 ("Hello."), N introduces himself in line 2: "my name is Riley". Following a 0.8 second inter-turn gap in line 3, N proposes dialogue in the form of a request: "Can we talk," (line 4). By requesting to *talk*, N treats the interaction so far as not yet having secured joint alignment to launch a conversation. Instead of accepting or rejecting N's proposal, PiC confronts N's identity with "who's that" (line 6).

After another gap, N repeats his self-identification in line 8, leaving no gap before reformulating his proposal to *talk* as a declarative: "I just want to talk to you.". N is not taking acceptance to talk for granted here: while the accountability of phoning someone is observable in all types of calls (Schegloff, 2002), the kind of opening observed here stands in stark contrast to a typical call characterised by a greeting sequence, establishing joint participation, and then providing a reason for the call or launching a first topic (Schegloff, 1968). Not only does N provide an explicit account, PiC also holds the caller to account as a means of resisting the conversation. This is demonstrated in line 10, where PiC's response "who are you." makes N further accountable for not having provided a satisfactory role or purpose. The verb *are* is phrasally prominent, suggesting that PiC has heard and understood



N in line 1, but that he is not any clearer about N's identity, role, or purpose in this encounter. In response, N specifies his institutional role "I'm with the polic:e." (line 12), immediately followed by another account similar to the one in line 8: "But I want to talk to you.=Try and help you." (lines 12-13).

N's use of 'I just X' (line 8) to account for his presence functions to restrict and contrast the negotiator role vis-à-vis what they might be thought to be doing, and in this way potentially pre-empting more explicit forms of resistance from PiC. By focussing on dialogue, and *talk*, N not only treats his presence as accountable, but also resists categorizing himself as 'police' (lines 5-6). When N eventually provides his identity as police in line 12, this is followed by "but I want to *talk* to you" with no gap emerging, thereby setting up a contrast with whatever the category 'police' might otherwise bring to the interaction.

Negotiators tended to use the verb *talk* when proposing dialogue in the early stages of the negotiation, regularly in the context of *help* (e.g., "But I want to talk to you.=Try and help you." in Extract 3). We did not find a similar use of *speak* when negotiators entered the scene with PiC. The cases where negotiators use *speak* to propose dialogue typically occur past the opening stages of the negotiation, and we found that *talk* and *speak* were used interchangeably on some occasions, i.e., both verbs were associated dialogue proposals where conversations had come to a halt. For example, in Extracts 4 and 5, from the same negotiation, PiC has remained disengaged for some time, and the negotiator is attempting to re-initiate conversation with him. In both cases, N proposes to PiC to "just speak to me" and "just talk to me", respectively, in order to establish whether PiC is "okay".

#### Extract 4. HN17\_1 [08:50]

01 N: Kei:th,  
 02 (6.7)  
 03 N: Kei:th I can't see you:. Just speak to me plea:se.  
 04 (1.7)  
 05 N: So that I know that you're oka:y:.  
 06 (13.6)

#### Extract 5. HN17\_3 [14:25]

01 N: Keith, I only want to know whether you're okay:.  
 02 (3.3)  
 03 N: Can you talk to me.  
 04 (0.5)  
 05 N: Plea::se?  
 06 (7.8)  
 07 N: I- if you're not able to com:e to me, That's fi:ne? But just-  
 08 can you just talk to me. Can you shout and let me know,  
 09 (2.0)  
 10 N: That you can hear me?

In Extract 4, following a failed summons in line 1, N proceeds to pursue a response with a complaint ("I can't see you:") followed by a dialogue proposal in request format: "Just speak to me plea:se." (line 3). The dialogue proposal is met with silence, and N increments on her proposal with a display of concern: "So that I know that you're oka:y:". The same N reiterates her concern in line 1 of Extract 5 (approx. 6 minutes later): "I only want to know whether you're okay:". After a 3.3 second silence, N produces another dialogue proposal ("Can you talk to me.", line 3), which she further pursues in line 5. Then, after nearly 8 seconds of silence, N does some work to frame her proposal as not necessitating PiC moving away from his current location (thus disclaiming any such 'hidden' agenda). She says "if you're not able to com:e to me, That's fi:ne?" (line 7), before contrasting this with "But just-can you just talk to me." (lines 7-8). In both Extracts 4 and 5, dialogue is proposed at a most

basic level, to establish PiC’s ability, or willingness, to respond. Throughout the longer sequence from which Extracts 4-5 are taken, N treats PiC as unable or unwilling to respond. In both cases, N’s use of “just speak/talk”, and pursuits such as “can you shout and let me know” (Extract 5, line 8), are used to minimize the efforts and consequences of answering the proposal, and we see that both *talk* and *speak* are associated with proposals to re-initiate a conversation that has come to a halt. While there are some differences between these two examples in terms of turn design/location, we did not find these to be systematic in terms of use of *talk/speak*; *speak* is found elsewhere in the data within modally framed turns, for example (e.g., “can you speak to me”).

Extracts 4 and 5 suggest how *talk* and *speak* can be used interchangeably, at least in some types of dialogue proposals. But next we will show how *speak* has a stronger association with more distal, and third-party, proposals compared to *talk*. First, in Extract 6, the current primary negotiator, N, is complaining about how cold it is (lines 1-5) with no verbal response from PiC. Then, in line 7, N proposes that the negotiation transitions from him to a new primary negotiator, using *speak*: “Do you want to speak to someone ↑else.” In Extract 7, N proposes PiC “speak to your mum,” (line 5), to “get you [PiC] some help.” (line 1).

Extract 6. HN10\_2 [19:21]

01 N: I am co:ld,  
 02 (.)  
 03 N: I’m only wearing a shirt.  
 04 (0.8)  
 05 N: You can probably hear it in my voice.  
 06 (5.1)  
 07 N: Do you want to speak to someone ↑else.  
 08 (2.5)

Extract 7. HN10\_7 [2:12:57]

01 N: The next stage of this is going to be to get you some help.  
 02 (0.8)  
 03 N: Yeah,  
 04 (1.4)  
 05 N: Speak to your mum,  
 06 (1.4)  
 07 N: Let your mum know you’re okay.

Our analysis shows that predominantly *speak*, not *talk*, is used when offering dialogue on behalf of a third party. Also, and perhaps in a broader sense, it appears that *speak* has a stronger association with distal types of dialogue proposals, compared to *talk*. Extract 8, our case in point, shows the negotiator leaving an answer machine message after having failed to get through.

Extract 8. HN24\_2 [1:30]

01 N: Hello, Kevin? This is uh: this is Stephen from  
 02 Highfordshire polic:e, Uh: I'd like to speak to you this  
 03 afternoon, (0.4) Can you ring me plea:se on: (0.3)  
 04 ((telephone number)) (0.4) Thank you.

N’s proposal, “I’d like to speak to you” (line 2) specifies a prospective time (“this afternoon”), and N proceeds to request that PiC calls back (“Can you ring me plea:se on: (...)”; lines 3-4), thereby providing PiC with a resource for accepting the proposal at some

(distal) point in the near future, i.e., not so much in the (proximal) here and now as is frequently the case with *talk* proposals.

We found differences in the use of *talk* and *speak*, other than in early proposals (Extract 3), and in terms of proximal/distal proposals (Extracts 6-8). One prevalent difference was the presence or absence of explicit stances or evaluations towards the activity the verb represents. We found that negotiators would on occasion frame *talk* in positive terms, the equivalent of which was not found in uses of *speak*. Extract 9 demonstrates this point.

Extract 9. HN5 [48:38]

01 N: Let's just carry on talking for a while.  
02 (0.6)  
03 N: (cal-) talking costs nothing does it.  
04 (1.3)  
05 PiC: Yeah it does, =It costs me time,  
06 (0.6)

Following the inter-turn gap in line 2, N pursues an acceptance of his dialogue proposal in line 1, with the declarative assertion “talking costs nothing” followed by the tag question format “does it.”. N’s question is thereby designed for a ‘no’ in agreement; however, PiC does not agree: Following a 1.3 second gap, she disagrees with N’s assertion on the basis that “It costs me time,” (line 5). PiC thereby rejects the dialogue proposal, and N’s attempt to frame *talk* as low in commitment fails to get the agreement it was designed for.

Our findings so far show that both *talk* and *speak* are associated with dialogue proposals; however, uses of *speak* are skewed towards distal (third party) dialogue proposals, whereas *talk* is found primarily in proximal proposals involving N and PiC in the here and now. In quantitative terms, negotiators use *talk* in 224 (62%), and *speak* in 136 (37%), of the total number (n=360) of dialogue proposals. When distinguishing whether the proposal is made on behalf of the negotiator, or a third party, third party proposals were overwhelmingly produced with *speak*, not *talk*: from a total of 65 third party proposals, 55, or 84%, contain *speak* and not *talk*. Third-party proposals account for 40% of *speak* proposals but only 4% of the *talk* actions. A chi-square test indicates that the skewed distribution of third party proposals towards *speak* as opposed to *talk* is unlikely to be random.<sup>2</sup> Other differences include the association between *talk* and positive evaluations of dialogue (Extract 9), and with how negotiators account for their emerging presence (Extract 3) – uses which were not found in association with *speak*. We found no instances of PiC requesting to *talk* or *speak* with current negotiators; however, they did on occasion request to *talk* or *speak* with a third party.

In the next section, we show that the verb *talk* provides a readier resource than *speak* for PiCs to reject the negotiation. We focus on proximal proposals; that is, those made on behalf of the present negotiator(s), as these had a wider association with both *talk* and *speak*.

### Resistance towards dialogue proposals with *talk* or *speak*

In this section we show that when PiCs provide answers to negotiators’ dialogue proposals (as a second pair part), they are more likely to reject those formulated with *talk* compared to *speak*. Crucially, while PiCs generally resist accepting the negotiators’ dialogue proposals, their resistance takes more explicit and escalated forms following *talk* than *speak*. We first present a quantitative distribution of responses to dialogue proposals, then we provide our case-by-case analysis of responses to *talk* and *speak* proposals.

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<sup>2</sup> ( $\chi^2 = 74.029$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

We identified a total of 295 dialogue proposals made on behalf of the negotiator. Overall, PiCs rejected dialogue proposals in 14% of all cases, and overwhelmingly, 93% (38) of these followed a *talk* proposal compared to 7% (3) following a *speak* proposal. The stronger association between *talk* and explicit rejection, than between *speak* and explicit rejection, is supported by a chi-square test<sup>3</sup>, and is also observable in the overall distributions (see Figure 1). When proposals were formulated with *talk*, PiCs rejected the proposal in 18% of cases; by comparison, only 4% of proposals formulated with *speak* were rejected.

Silent responses to *talk/speak* (see Extracts 2, 4-7) featured in a majority, 69%, of all cases: 78% of *speak* proposals, and 65% of *talk* proposals. A chi-square test suggests that the higher proportion of silent responses following *speak* than following *talk* is unlikely to be random.<sup>4</sup> The remaining responses to dialogue proposals were identified as either verbal alignment or disalignment. 12% of responses following *talk* proposals displayed some form of verbal disalignment, and 5% displayed some form of verbal alignment. The corresponding proportions were 10% (disalignment) and 9% (alignment) for responses to *speak* proposals.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

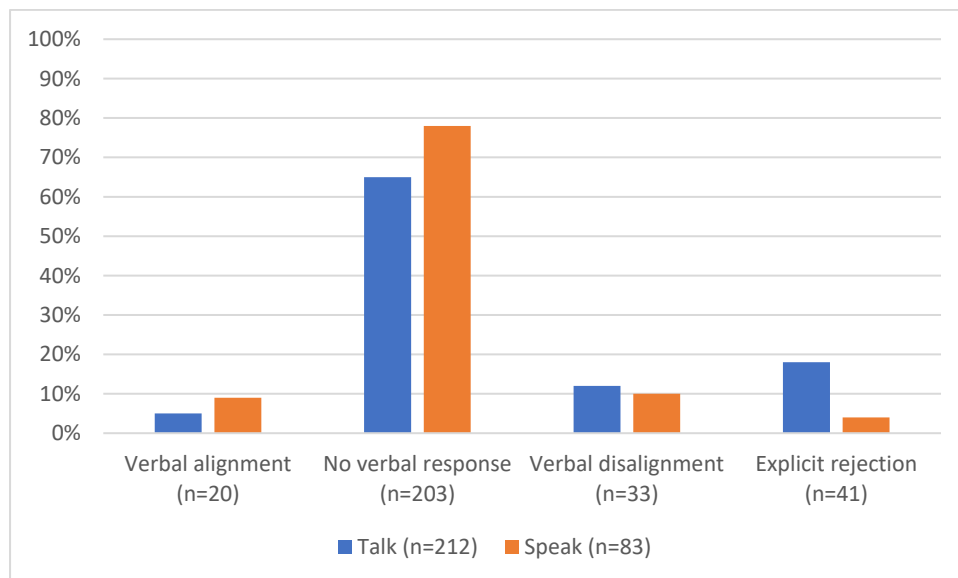


Figure 1. Distribution of second pair part response types following negotiators' dialogue proposal, to 'talk' (blue) or 'speak' (orange). Each proportional value is normalised according to respective totals n 'talk' proposals (n=212) and 'speak' (n=83). Total n=295 and proportions exclude cases where both verbs are used within the same turn.

Starting with cases of explicit rejection, Extract 1b, introduced above as Extract 1a, provides a clear case of a PiC rejecting a N's request to *talk*. PiC contrasts *talk* with his own agenda, thereby undermining its relevance. Prior to this excerpt, PiC has demanded cigarettes.

Extract 1b. HN24\_7 [2:11]

01 N: Kevin, I need to:: try and find a way. to get  
 02 you those cigarettes.=In the meantime,  
 03 Can we talk about how you are.  
 04 (0.5)  
 05 PiC: No:, I don't want to ta:lk,

<sup>3</sup> ( $X^2 = 10.207$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )

<sup>4</sup> ( $X^2 = 4.857$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )

06 (1.0)  
 07 PiC: Y[ou either] ↑ring me when you've got the  
 08 N: [°Okay° ]  
 09 PiC: fucking cigarettes or don't bother.  
 10 (0.2)  
 11 N: (m)kay,=What's what's going to happen when  
 12 we get the cigarettes though Kevin.  
 13 (0.6) / ((PiC hangs up))

N uses PiC's demand as part of an offer in lines 1-3: "I need to:: try and find a way. To get you those cigarettes.", but defers delivery of the cigarettes and makes a proposal to talk "In the meantime" (line 2). N's proposal is rejected outright, with a prolonged "No:," followed by an affirmation of the rejection in a full clausal form (line 5). PiC does not explicitly account for his rejection, but instead displays a negative stance towards *talk* via his precise phonetic design: "ta:lk," is prolonged with extra aspiration following the syllable-initial [t], and a hyperarticulated vowel [o:], with extra lip-rounding and more back vowel quality than expected. Thus, we have an example of how participants may orient to the word *talk*, precisely, and the activity it proposes, as problematic. PiC not only recycles the activity he rejects but recycles it in a way which accentuates how far he is from accepting N's proposal, treating *talk* as irrelevant. Next, PiC produces an ultimatum in 'either-or' format ("You either ↑ring me when you've the fucking cigarettes or don't bother.", lines 7/9). While the ultimatum does not include a time limit (hence, no urgency), it conveys his intention to reject dialogue until his side of the deal is fulfilled. In lines 11-12, N expresses his concern that nothing might happen after they give PiC the cigarettes. PiC hangs up (line 13).

In Extract 10, PiC explicitly rejects N's *speak* proposal in line 6 ("No: I ca:n't").

Extract 10. HN24\_3 [2:59]

01 PiC: Hello?  
 02 (.)  
 03 N: .ptkhhh hello Kevin=it's Steve. Can you speak to me for a while  
 04 please.  
 05 (0.6)  
 06 PiC: No: I ca:n't. I've told you if your fucking bloke's ↑still  
 07 here, I'm going to start shooting in the next thirty seconds.

N calls PiC and lines 1-3 shows the summons-response sequence followed by N's greeting and self-identification, immediately followed by an opening proposal (request): "Can you speak to me for a while please." (lines 3-4). Following a 0.6 second gap, PiC rejects the proposal explicitly, with dispreferred response "No:" and the affirmation "I can't". (line 6). In no uncertain terms does PiC reject N's proposal, and he expands on the rejection with a threat to start shooting if the policeman standing outside his door does not move away (lines 6-7). But although this is an explicit rejection, we note that, unlike in Extract 1b, the PiC does not highlight 'speaking' as the activity to reject. Indeed, while there were only three cases of explicit rejection to *speak* proposals in our data (compared to 38 following *talk* proposals), there were no cases in our data where PiCs use the verb *speak* explicitly to reject a dialogue proposal.

Next, we provide some examples of verbal disalignment following proposals to *talk* (Extract 11) and *speak* (Extract 12).

Extract 11. HN34\_1 [6:58]

01 PiC: Hello.  
 02 N: Mosi my n- my name is Riley.  
 03 (0.8)

04 N: Can we talk,  
 05 (1.5)  
 06 PiC: Who's that.

Extract 12. HN24\_8 [0:27]

01 N: One- once you've got them.=Will you  
 02 speak to me then.  
 03 (2.0)  
 04 N: So we could try and [work:- ]  
 05 PiC: [↑What fo]:r.  
 06 (0.3)  
 07 N: So we can work through a way to help you.

Although sequentially fitted as a pre-second insert expansions, PiC's responses in Extracts 11 (line 6) and 12 (line 5) are, in both cases, non-answers to the proposals which stall progress of the sequence initiated by N. Unlike Extracts 1b and 10, however, PiC is not rejecting the dialogue proposal in explicit terms and invites N to elaborate rather than closing down opportunities for sequential progression.

Extract 13 represents a rare case of verbal alignment, and affiliation, following a *talk* proposal.

Extract 13. HN3\_3 [34:50]

01 N: That's why I wanna t- I wanna- I wanna come and sort this out.=  
 02 I wanna [talk to] you about it.=And I've- promise you. .hhhh  
 03 PiC: [.MHHH ]  
 04 N: it's me::? (.) coming to talk >to you<.=That's why I've given  
 05 you this pri:va<sup>te</sup> pho:ne, (.) so it's you and me. (0.5) and we  
 06 can get this sorted out.  
 07 (2.1)  
 08 PiC: Okay.  
 09 N: [Is that] all ri[:ght.]  
 10 PiC: [(yes- )] [Yes ] that'd be nice.

Our analyses suggest that alignment with dialogue proposals may occur when *spea*k, and *talk*, are associated with more concrete outcomes. In Extract 13, for example, PiC aligns/agrees with N's proposal to "get this sorted out." (line 6), and not the *talk* proposal alone. Indeed, it appears that PiC may be preparing to respond to the first TCU in N's turn at line 1, stating that she wants to 'come and sort this out'. PiC takes an in-breath as N produces a second TCU within the same turn, in overlap with 'talk' itself (line 3). Compared to earlier examples, where *talk* was proposed as the main activity, here the main activity is to fix, or 'sort', matters: actions, rather than 'words'.

### Participants' orientations to *talk* as an object of resistance towards the negotiation

The evidence presented so far points to some of the similarities and differences in uses of *talk* and *spea*k in shaping dialogue proposals, and how responses to dialogue proposals is tied to word selection. This final section sheds further light on the main point of our findings, namely that *talk* is more readily available than *spea*k for rejecting, and undermining, the proposed activity. First, we demonstrate how PiCs recruit *talk*, not *spea*k, to undermine the negotiation also in a broader sense, using *talk* actively as an object of resistance in these encounters (Extract 14). Second, we suggest how negotiator may work actively to avoid explicit rejections (to *talk*) to emerge in the first place (Extract 15).

In Extract 9 we saw that when negotiators provide positive evaluations of *talk* as part of proposing dialogue, PiC rejected the proposal as well as N's positive evaluation in explicit terms. Next, in Extract 14, we show how a PiC recruits *talk* (not *speak*) to actively undermine dialogue, and the negotiation, having just rejected a proposal put forward by N to solve the crisis. PiC contrasts *talk* with specific, purposeful actions.

Extract 14. HN1\_2 [1:21:01]

01 N: I'll tell you what we can get at the  
 02 police station.=We can get. (0.4) a m- a mental health  
 03 charity,=Have you heard of Mi:nd at all?  
 04 (1.9)  
 05 PiC: Say that again,  
 06 N: Have you heard of mi:nd,  
 07 (3.0)  
 08 PiC: I've seen a poster >on the bus<.=  
 09 N: =Yeah?=An' (another) ano- .hh an:'- .h you know. .hh the local  
 10 poli:ce, (.) can get those people .h to come to the police  
 11 station,  
 12 (2.0)  
 13 N: And that's g- that's >there you go<, That's a starter for  
 14 ten isn't it.  
 15 (0.4)  
 16 PiC: °Yes (but) ( )°  
 17 (0.4)  
 18 N: You know. [uh- ]  
 19 PiC: [(no) ]  
 20 (.)  
 21 N: And that- that you know that's help we can you know (.)  
 22 genuinely provide. We could get them there (in the-) .h you  
 23 know tomorrow morning.  
 24 PiC: That's not help.  
 25 (.)  
 26 PiC: What- i:- that's not help.=i- that's not: (0.4) <that's not  
 27 uh::m:> getting me a place.  
 28 (1.0)  
 29 PiC: That's just the police who's talking.  
 30 (2.5)  
 31 PiC: It's all talking now.

The extract starts about 90 minutes into the negotiation. PiC has resisted N's proposal to come down and follow him to the police station. PiC has previously been involved with social services but has now turned eighteen and is ineligible for support. He is also concerned that his situation will worsen if he goes to the police station. In lines 1-3, N specifies alternative support with the mental health charity 'Mind'. N does so in a multi-unit turn: "I'll tell you what we can get" (line 1) sets the frame for further turn components to specify the proposed solution. Prior to any transition-relevance place, N requests a confirmation whether PiC has heard of 'Mind' ("Have you heard of Mi:nd at all?", line 3), in which the "at all" opens for a 'no' as a relevant response (Heritage, 2010), i.e., opening for the possibility that the PiC has not heard of this charity. Following a 1.9 second gap (line 4), PiC initiates a repair in line 5 ("Say that again,"), which, compared to the strong forms of resistance we saw in some of the earlier cases, aligns with rather than blocks progressivity of N's proposal.

We observe that PiC gives a go-ahead to N's solution-based proposal ("I've seen a poster >on the bus<.", line 8), which N then proceeds to unpack in lines 9-14. PiC then displays weaker forms of resistance in lines 15-19, before N formulates the proposed alternative as "help we can you know (.) genuinely provide." (lines 21-22). PiC now rejects N outright, with "That's not help." (line 24), using N's very own formulation, 'help'. And, in so

doing, PiC also rejects the possibility of seeing the charity, “tomorrow morning”, as N suggests in line 23. PiC accounts for his rejection of N’s proposed solution in lines 26-31, first by explaining how going to the police station and meeting the charity is not “getting [PiC] a place.” (line 27; PiC here refers to his previously expressed wishes to leave his home and his abusive mother to get his own place to live). Then, PiC adds to his account with the use of *talk* in lines 29 (“That’s just the police who’s talking.”) and 31 (“it’s all talking now.”). Thus, PiC treats N’s proposed solution (i.e., ‘help’) as not doing anything relevant nor useful. This fits with the idiomatic use of *talk* as ‘not action’ introduced in the literature section of the paper: we observe that when specific actions are offered, the verb *talk* is a resource to reject the offer, highlighted as contrasting with actual ‘help’. It is with *talk*, not *speak*, that PiC turns from engaging in the conversation to undermining it. We find no equivalent cases with *speak* in our material.

We also observe how PiCs may actively seek an opportunity to reject the proposals put forward by N. In Extract 9, PiC rejected N’s dialogue proposal after N had recruited *talk* to minimise the costs involved in engaging in dialogue. And in Extract 1b, *talk* proved to be exactly the activity that PiC could single out as the target of their resistance. In Extract 14, while it was N’s solution-focussed proposal which was the target of PiC’s resistance, they actively recruited *talk* to support and strengthen their rejection, contrasting *talk* with actual solutions.

Based on our analysis, we argue that formulations of *talk* risk being used to explicitly undermine the negotiation, and that negotiators may do well to avoid such formulations. Our final extract, Extract 15, elaborates on this point, by suggesting how Ns may work actively to avoid opening up slots for rejection based on positive evaluations of *talk*. N starts formulating an assessment, with reference to *talk* (line 7), but cuts off his own turn production thereby treating his own formulation as inapposite.

Extract 15. HN22\_1 [17:40]

01 N: Have you thought about what else, what you’d like  
 02 to do?  
 03 PiC: ( )  
 04 (2.9)  
 05 PiC: I know: I know what I need to do.=And I- (1.5) (I think)  
 06 (2.8) I- I don’t >I need to get< back to uh:::  
 07 N: What is that- mate you- we’re talking go- I’m- I’ve  
 08 not come (n-) I’ve not come down.=I promise  
 09 I won’t come dow:n and grab you or anything  
 10 like that Jason,  
 11 PiC: The worst thing anybody can do: is come down here.  
 12 (0.4)  
 13 N: I’m not gonna ↑do that.

Prior to the extract, N and PiC have engaged in lengthy conversation about PiC’s personal interests, which include camping in the woods. N’s question at line 1, about ‘what else’ PiC would like to do, implies that the topic of the prior conversation is complete, and that N is attempting to further expand the productive sequence that has so far been unfolding. We cannot hear PiC’s response to N’s question at line 3. After a lengthy gap (line 4), PiC articulates a possible continuation or reformulation of line 3, while not showing much willing to share the details with N (“I know what I need to do.”, line 5). PiC proceeds to disengage with the current conversation and moves to another location on the roof he is situated on, away from the negotiator (“>I need to get< back to uh:::”, line 6). In lines 7-10 N attempts to secure PiC’s continued attention, however his turn production is not straightforward, with several abandoned turn initiations. The third initiation projects a positive assessment and appreciation of their dialogue so far: “we’re talking go-” (“go-” a likely candidate for



‘good’). N self-repairs and his fourth turn initiation projects specific evidence of how N’s actions so far have not constituted any threat or force (“I’ve not come down [to your location]”, line 8) or that he is going to at any future point (“I promise I won’t come down and grab you”, line 9).

We suggest that the cut-off and self-repair of “we’re talking go-” reduces the risk of explicit rejection by PiC next: we observe explicit resistance to N’s positive assessments (of *talk*) elsewhere in the data, in that PiCs challenge their validity, and proceed to undermine the negotiation instead of engaging with it (see Extracts 9 and 14). In contrast, “I’ve not come down” seems less vulnerable to explicit rejection or disagreement, as its validity is available for verification based on the events in the encounter so far: irrefutably, N has not yet moved to grab PiC (see Sikveland, Kevoe-Feldman, and Stokoe 2019). Indeed, at the next transition-relevance place (line 11), PiC does not reject N’s assertion, but independently provides his own view on its importance, as it would be “the worst thing anybody can do:”. PiC’s response is something that is easily agreed to by N, and N can do so without undermining the negotiation progress nor PiC’s deontic authority. Thus, we suggest N here displays tacit knowledge about what sorts of formulations are more/less likely to be rejected outright (see Stokoe, 2013); in this case, that a positive evaluation of *talk* as a joint activity is unlikely to facilitate PiC’s further engagement in the conversation.

## Discussion

This paper has examined how word selection is associated with dialogue proposals, and their responses, in live crisis negotiations. By comparing *talk* with an alternative formulation of dialogue, *speak*, we have identified different distributions according to their constitution in vehicles for action, and also their association with local consequences within the interaction. We have shown how responses to proposals range from alignment to passive forms of resistance (silence), to more active forms (verbal disalignment) and explicit forms of resistance. And it appears that some formulations are easier to (explicitly) reject than others. We found that when negotiators propose to *talk* to persons in crisis, they are more likely to face explicit rejection than when they propose to *speak*.

These empirical findings confirm that dialogue proposals constitute a core activity of crisis negotiation. For example, we demonstrated that negotiators used *talk* as a way of distancing themselves from regular police services (Extract 3), possibly to demonstrate a less agentive, invasive or forceful agenda than is normatively associated with police (McMains & Mullins, 2014). Furthermore, *talk* was also used in association with more evaluative stances towards dialogue (Extracts 9, 14, 15), both as part of proposing dialogue (negotiators) and resisting or rejecting them (people in crisis). In contrast, *speak* had a stronger association with prospective, distal interactions involving a third party, and was not associated with an evaluation for or against dialogue. *Speak* was not, unlike *talk*, highlighted as an activity to resist. These findings have implications for crisis negotiation as a practice, as well as for the study of word selection and resistance in social interaction more broadly, which we address in turn below.

Empirical scrutiny of the variability in use of *talk* or *speak* is perhaps particularly applicable to crisis negotiations, and related professions, where *talk* (not *speak*) gets promoted as the solution to a problem. ‘Talk to me’ is used as a motto for hostage and crisis negotiation internationally, via for example the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Oxburgh et al., 2017). Yet, we have shown that the verb *talk* does not always mobilize productive responses from persons in crisis in actual negotiations. Our findings suggest that this is one of perhaps several, double-edged swords in crisis negotiation. That is, if *talk* is available as a motto for negotiation, it is also more accessible for persons in crisis as a resource to ironize

and for resistance (e.g., Extracts 1a/b, 14). While we acknowledge that negotiation mottos such as ‘talk to me’ builds on more comprehensive approaches to crisis negotiation (e.g., to actively listen to the person in crisis: Vecchi, Hasselt, & Romano 2005), and therefore ought not to be taken too literally, we have unpacked *how* negotiators actually implement and respond to formulations of ‘talk to me’.

The paper has shed light on what has been described as “the elusive contrast between talk and speak” (Viberg, 2017). We found that the verb *talk* is strongly associated with proposing dialogue as a proximal, shared activity between the proposer and recipient, while *speak* is associated with more distal proposals. The representation of *talk* as a shared, co-constructed activity, may explain why persons in crisis find *talk* formulations easier to resist, being precisely the activity they did not seek out in the first place. We argue that the study of the semantics of *talk* involves acknowledging its place in culturally shared idioms about having an agenda (“we need to talk”) but set in contrast with action (“you can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk”). The association between *talk* and its (*ir*)relevance is widely used and idiomatically accessible, in English and many other languages (Stokoe, 2018), an association we do not find with the verb *speak*.

As we noted in our Introduction, strongly explicit forms of resistance are relatively unstudied in the available conversation analytic literature. In crisis negotiations, various forms of resistance are representative of the kinds of interactional challenges negotiators face in their work. We acknowledge that our findings are representative of special circumstances; however, these are circumstances which accentuate the relevance of word selection, specifically *talk* and *speak*, as consequential for how strongly a client is going to resist in the next turn. We are not arguing that negotiators and others dealing with strongly resistant individuals ought to altogether avoid using the verb *talk* as part of their proposals and other actions; our findings are more nuanced than that. It is not ‘just’ the word we need to focus on, but the action, and sequential position, it is part of. Rather, at the core of our analysis is the understanding that *talk* is more readily treated as an object of resistance. But, as illustrated in cases of verbal alignment (see Extract 13), *talk* can, like *speak*, be framed as purposeful when paired with examples of what can be done.

Overall, this paper has provided evidence that some actions, when composed of particular word selections, are easier to reject than others, specifically in circumstances where (strong) resistance is to be expected. While resistance can be strong/active or weaker/passive, we have shown that word selection matters, as members’ oriented-to concerns as well as in action-outcome pairings. We have identified the interactional risks associated with in framing dialogue proposals – past, current or future - with the verb *talk*, at the same time as *talk* is the very activity underway. Our paper contributes to our understanding of “the word-selection problem”; how “the components that get selected as the elements of a turn get selected”, and shapes “the understanding achieved by the turn’s recipients” (Schegloff, 2007, p. xiv). We have shown that, in crisis negotiations, every word matters, and that word selection is not only systematic, but consequential.

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