

LETTING GO OF THE PAST IN SPANISH THERAPEUTIC DISCOURSE: AN EXAMINATION OF VERBS AND DISCURSIVE VARIABLES

Nydia Flores-Ferrán

Abstract

This article presents an exploration of several linguistic and discursive variables as they relate to behavior change obtained from psychotherapeutic motivational interviews. These interviews were conducted with native Spanish speakers, a relatively under investigated language minority group in the US with regard to this type of discourse. Using a linguistic framework, the study examines the tense, mood, and aspect (TMA) of Spanish verbs, the semantic verb type, such as desire, ability, readiness, reasons, need and commitment (DARN-C), and the context in which the verbs were produced in [+/- conflict] in narratives. Using qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study shows how shifts in verb tenses, the production of DARN-C semantic verb types, and speakers' utterances implicitly involve an expression of change. Based on Grimshaw's (1990) and Labov and Fanshel's (1977) tenets regarding conflict talk in which they note that conflict involves speech acts such as defenses, retreats and challenges, and Brenneis (1996) who maintains that the contents of conflict narratives are intertwined with the "narrator, audience, purposes and expectations" (p. 42), the study shows how the presence of conflict-related narratives decreases between interviews. Namely, participants decrease the use of utterances that recount past events and events containing conflict and move in the direction of speaking about future events and less conflict as their sessions progressed.

Keywords: Verbs; Spanish therapeutic discourse; DARN-C; Conflict discourse.

1. Introduction

Scholars have investigated therapeutic discourse by examining therapeutic interactions in relation to behavior change (e.g., Amrhein, Miller, Yahne, Palmer and Fulcher 2003; Gonçaves and Machado 1999; Kulik, and Carlino 1987; Labov and Fanshel 1977; Laffal 1987; Leahy 2004; Mondada 1998; Russell 1987). Several of these scholars have focused on understanding and predicting behavior change through language. For instance, Labov and Fanshel (1977) have maintained that the therapeutic interview can be studied from two perspectives, as part of a disorder and as a communicative event, in which a therapist and a client hold a conversation and interact under general rules and patterns of face-to-face interaction (p.12). During their analysis, the researchers expressed the following regarding their observation of a subject in therapy: "Since her behavior has not necessarily changed, this is equivalent to rejecting therapy" (p. 34). Their seminal study of therapeutic discourse unveiled principles that have been recognized by most scholars in this line of inquiry.

Language produced during psychotherapy has also been investigated using a psycholinguistic and clinical framework (i.e., Amrhein, Miller, Yahne, Palmer and Fulcher 2003; Behrman 2006). In particular, Amrhein et al. (2003) have investigated how commitment language strength can predict behavior change (p. 265). They

examined verbal utterances and argued that researchers cannot make predictions on the results of treatment by merely counting the occurrences of verbal commitment. Thus, they suggested that investigators delve further into the strength of an utterance to examine change (p. 865).

In the case of Spanish linguistic minorities in the US, behavior change has not been fully investigated in the context of psychotherapeutic motivational interviews (MI) using a linguistic lens. With this in mind, this study examines several linguistic and social variables that contribute to our understanding of how change and adherence/commitment to treatment is expressed among Spanish-speaking adults who have been diagnosed with depression. In particular, the study examines verb tense, mood, and aspect (TMA); the semantic verb type (Desire, Ability, Readiness, Reasons, Need and Commitment, or DARN-C verbs); and the discursive context in which these forms appear. The study does not suggest that by *only* examining verbs researchers can determine how change is implicitly expressed. Rather, the article focuses on how an examination of verbs can contribute to understanding change; it uses a linguistic lens not a behavioral lens to depict change in talk.

The study also points to how participants in this particular social interaction decrease conflict-related talk as they progress within two psychotherapeutic MIs. As noted by Brenneis (1988), a non-linguistic variable such as powerlessness is relevant in shaping talk (p. 228). Thus, if a study is able to capture instances in which the participants express their helplessness and later express changes in powerlessness-type discourse, then the linguistic features that contribute to capturing these changes become relevant to this type of research.

When examining large amounts of data, Schegloff (1993: 102) has argued that we are looking at multiple or aggregates of single instances. Although the study uses quantitative analysis to describe group tendencies, in following Schegloff, it also takes into account a single instance of an utterance in the qualitative analysis as exemplifying an environment of possible relevant occurrence (p. 103).

This article is organized as follows: Section 2 explains the importance of verbs in this study, while Section 3 discusses the literature on Motivational Interviews as discourse. Section 4 addresses the topic of conflict in oral narratives. Sections 5 and 6 are devoted to describing the study and the results. These sections are followed by a summary and conclusion.

2. Can we examine change through verbs?

Amrhein (1992), in citing Gibbs and Delaney (1987), has noted that while there have been studies investigating how indirect speech acts convey speaker intentions, he argues that little has been reported with regard to how verbs used in direct, performative speech acts convey speaker intentions. Therefore, in the section that follows, I first discuss how studies have addressed the semantic verb type in psychotherapeutic discourse. Later, I will explain the importance of verb tense in relation to this study.

2.1. Verbs and semantic categories

Amrhein et al. (2003) have noted that empirical studies have found connections between expressed commitment to change and perceived change in behavior. However, researchers have varied in their analyses of change in patient and client talk in the medical profession (Audi 1986; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper 1989; Kulik and Carlino 1987; Gonçalves and Machado (1999); Laffal 1987; Muntigl and Hadic Zabala 2008; Zola 1966; among others). While several of these studies have examined explicit utterances or implicit meaning, others have focused on the classical studies of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), using Speech Act Theory to uncover speech patterns as they relate to behavior change. However, Amrhein et al. (2003) made the distinction of coding the speakers' natural language by examining the semantic verb type, including themes of desire, ability, reasons, need, and commitment, known as the DARN-C motivational factors to investigate behavior changeⁱ.

Following several tenets of Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), Amrhein (1992) analyzed verbal commitments and noted that certain verbs convey speaker intentions. Verbs such as 'promise', 'agree', 'hope', and 'guess' are considered performative-committing verbs because they obligate the speaker to perform an act for the listener (p. 757). Therefore, the semantic category of a verb is critical for the examination of speaker intentions. For instance, Levelt (1989) has maintained that the most direct means a speaker has to express the illocutionary force of an intention involves explicitly using verbs of a particular class (p. 65). If we consider verbs related to the motivational factors noted by Amrhein et al. (2003), desire, ability, readiness, reasons, need and commitment (DARN-C), their semantic category can be examined in context as they relate to behavior change. In sections 5.2, 5.2.1, and 5.2.2, I explain how these verbs were analyzed in the corpus.

2.2. Verbs as a grammatical category

Verbs are considered a central grammatical category of utterances and a vital feature of any language. Because they encode the time of an event, verbs represent an important aspect in the examination of utterances that implicitly relate to change. Fleischman (1983) has suggested that

[m]ost linguists would probably concur that tense is a deictic category whose primary function is to relate the time of an event or situation predicated in an utterance or discourse to some other time, typically the moment of the speech event or, in the case of relative tense relationships (p. 184).

Comrie (1976) has also suggested that “[v]erb tense relates to the time of a situation referred to to some other time, usually to the moment of speaking” (p. 2). He defined events in the present as existing simultaneously with the moment of speaking, the past tense located prior to the moment of speaking, and the future tense located at a time subsequent to the moment of speaking (p. 2).

ⁱ This study focuses on the verbs' TMA and the DARN-C factors which will be considered as a semantic verb types and expands on Amrhein's et al. (2003) previous research. Refer to Van Voorst (1992) for further discussion on psychological verb types and semantic verb classes.

Verbs are not only important in that they encode time. One central component, aspect, is also important. Van Voorst (1992) has maintained that aspect covers the internal structure of an event (p. 66). Fleischman (1983) has suggested that grammaticalized under a verb's aspect are "meaning distinctions pertaining typically to non-modal features of the situation described by the verb other than its 'time', such as duration, boundedness, completion, repetition, inception, termination, and the like." (p. 184). Fleischman has also pointed out that a speaker's subjective views are encoded in aspect, as aspect tends to reflect the speaker's view of the event at a particular moment (p. 185). For instance, a verb has perfective meaning. In the following examples provided by Comrie (1976), he made the distinction that example (1) is perfective while example 2 is non-perfective (p. 52).

- (1) I have lost my penknife.
- (2) I lost my penknife.

Comrie has suggested that the perfective verb in example (1) may imply that the penknife is still lost, but the non-perfective verb in example (2) implies something different, more definitive.

Nonetheless, Spanish has the preterit and the imperfect preterit. As shown in example (3), the preterit in Spanish is generally considered terminative, punctual, or definitive.

- (3) *María llegó.*
(‘María arrived’.)

Unlike English, however, Spanish also has the *pretérito imperfecto* (imperfect). The imperfect is considered ambiguous in that it includes the progressive, habitual, durative, continuous, and indefinite events (García Fernández & Martínez-Atienza 2003). To illustrate the different functions of this form, consider example (4) produced by a participant in this study.

- (4) *Iba a la oficina del doctor.*
(a) I went to the doctor's office.
(b) I used to/would go to the doctor's office.
(c) I was going to the doctor's office.

Its different possible interpretations may be rendered by the context, however. Example 4a can be interpreted as an action in the past that may have been completed. In example 4b, the action occurred repeatedly. In example 4c, the action occurred over an extended period of time but has since ceased.ⁱⁱ

Therefore, while the preterit encodes definiteness and termination of an event, the imperfect does not categorically do the same. Namely, both a verb's telicity or the

ⁱⁱ The distinction between the two forms, the preterit and the imperfect, and the grammaticalization occurring within Spanish verb forms has been the object of discussion in several studies. See Fleischman 1989; Bybee, Perkins, Revere & Pagliuca 1994; and Schwenter 1994 among others, for an extension of this discussion. This current study focuses on the distribution of the forms within the context of the motivational interviews and it attempts to characterize how change is expressed implicitly through verb TMA and the DARN-C verbs.

property of a verb that indicates if an action or event has been completed, and the speakers' choice to make use of this tense, are important factors to consider when examining how change is implicitly expressed.

The mood of the verb also indicates the manner in which an action is intended. In Spanish, for example, there are multiple moods, including the indicative, imperative, conditional and subjunctive. Grammarians (i.e., Alarcos Llorach 1994) have reported that the indicative represents or states an apparent fact or asks a question. The imperative is used for a command or request while the conditional is used for hypothetical situations. The subjunctive represents doubt or uncertainty, desire, or supposition. Gili Gaya (1973) has maintained that

El contexto y la situación del hablante desempeñan papel decisivo en la mediación de los tiempos relativos, y por sí solos pueden suplir a las conexiones estrictamente gramaticales...Los tiempos no son, por lo tanto, valores fijos, sino modificaciones relativas del concepto verbal” (p. 120).

[My translation: The context and the situation of the speaker play a decisive role in the mediation of relative tenses, and alone they can strictly supply the grammatical connections...Tenses are not, therefore, fixed values, but modifications that are relative to a verbal concept.]

Studies that have investigated mood selection among Hispanics and non-Hispanics reported that the conditional and subjunctive moods are produced less often than other verb tenses (Bull, Canton, Cord, Farely, Finan, Jacobs, Jaeger, Koons, Tuegel 1947; Lantoff 1978; Lavendra 1983; Flores-Ferrán 2007; Terrell & Hooper 1974; Torres 1989 among others). Torres (1989) explained that the Spanish conditional and subjunctive moods as a syntactic-semantic verb class are associated with several semantic factors, such as volition, hope clauses, doubt clauses and emotion clauses (p. 70).

Thus, and with regard to their relational aspect to this study, it is posited here that several features of verbs are critical linguistic variables if and only if they are examined within their discursive context. The following section discusses the discursive context in which verbs are examined: Motivational Interviews (MIs).

3. Motivational interviews in psychotherapeutic discourse: Why this social interaction?

There are several reasons why Motivational Interview (MI) discourse was selected for this study. First, depression is considered by others as stigmatized and this leads to self-stigma. Self-stigma refers to when individuals internalize the negative associations of depression (e.g., weak character) (Interian, Martínez, Guarnaccia, Vega and Escobar 2007). Second, depression stigma beliefs reside within individuals' local cultural contexts and are manifested through language. For example, Interian et al. (2007) reported that antidepressant use was perceived by others as “implying more severe illness, weakness or failure to cope with problems, and being under the effects of a drug”. Thus, it is hypothesized that because there is stigma involved and because clients who attend these sessions make negative associations, the discourse produced by the clients will be conflictful. The presence of conflict-related narratives is therefore used in this current study to examine client change or transition to change. As noted by Labov and Fanchel (1977: 35-36),

The contradictions and pressures that exist in the therapeutic situation are responsible for the creation of two distinct fields of discourse within the therapeutic session. One is the style of everyday life, in which a patient tells about the events of the preceding days in a fairly neutral, objective, colloquial style...It is marked by the absence of emotionally colored language on the one hand, and of abstract, therapeutically oriented language on the other. A second field of discourse is *interview style*...Some discourse is easily recognized as characteristic of the therapeutic session by special vocabulary: “interpretation”, “relationship”, “guilt”...

A third reason for selecting this particular social interaction has to do with the fact that “social scientific and linguistic analysis turned to psychotherapy as early as the 1950s” (Peräklyä, Antaki, Vehviläinen, and Leudar 2008: 7). This suggests that a body of pre-existing research could inform this study. Over the past thirty years, linguists have turned to the interactional genre of therapeutic discourse. For instance, Labov and Fanchel (1977: 12) have suggested that

[t]he therapeutic interview has been the object of study under two major perspectives: first, as an element in the case history of a patient, illustrating the etiology and dynamics of a disorder as well as its treatment; second, as a communicative event, a conversation in which a therapist and patient interact under the general rules, constraints, and patterns of face-to-face interaction.

Thus, this discursive interaction lends itself to the examination of how change manifests through language.

Another reason that explains why this particular interaction is of interest has to do with the type of therapeutic session: Motivational Interviews. MI theory evolved from Rogerian psychotherapy, a person-centered counseling approach practiced in the 1940s and 1950s. MI practice is a client-centered therapeutic style, an approach that enhances readiness for change (Miller and Rollnick 2002: 25). Thus, it is conceivable that the linguistic strategies used by the therapist may move the client towards change. Even though the goal of the MI interaction is to move the client toward change, we have yet to uncover *how* change can be depicted in Spanish in the context of this particular social interaction.

Behrman (2006: 215) has examined adherence to vocal behavioral change in voice therapy by using MI in English. She posited that an “MI is a style of interpersonal communication in which resistance is minimized through the use of skillful listening in a directiveⁱⁱⁱ, constructive discussion about behavior change^{iv}”. That is, the discussion in this context is considered guided. Von Wormer (2007) has also noted that the MI approach is client or participant-centered in the sense that most of the statements concerning the problems of the client are elicited by the client himself. MI also contains more open-ended questions and reflective listening on the part of the therapist (Amrhein et al. 2003: 862). Since the practitioner is in a listening role, a participant’s response

ⁱⁱⁱ Directive in this sense means guided.

^{iv} While psychotherapy encourages change, this study does not examine the intersection between behavior change and all utterances produced in MI interaction. Rather, it focuses on only several linguistic features such as the semantics of the verb and the verbs’ TMA.

may be a free-standing narrative, a short utterance, or it may be constrained by an utterance that was initiated by the practitioner.

Thus, with regard to how MIs related to this study, one may predict that the client language will exhibit changes with regard to the features under study for several reasons. First, the clients volunteer to participate in two MIs and they have been referred to the MI because they have been determined as having a low adherence to medication based on clinical reports. Second, there are two MI interactions which allow the researcher to compare changes in the use of the linguistic features under examination. Third, the client is doing the speaking; the therapist is concerned with listening and guiding. That is, the client is producing most of the language of the corpus.

4. On conflict episodes in oral narratives

Labov (2001) conceived of a narrative as a way of reporting past events that have entered into the biography of the narrator. He suggested that an oral narrative of personal experience matches the projected order of the events and is characterized by a beginning, middle, and an end (Labov and Waletzky 1967). In other words, the organization of the narrative is complemented by coherence and cohesion. Hickmann (2004) suggested that coherence includes those aspects directly associated with the overall structure of the narrative content. On the other hand, cohesion involves aspects that “pertain to the linguistic expression of discourse-internal relations across clauses” (p. 282). For this study, I used the framework proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967: 359-360) in which a narrative is defined “as one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events in which it actually occurred”. Like narratives, conflicts also have “beginnings, middles and occasionally, ends or resting places” (Brenneis 1996: 43).

Brenneis (1996) noted that the contents of conflict narratives are connected through the circumstances in which they are recounted, and they are intertwined with the narrator, audience, purposes and expectations often reflecting on different speakers, audiences, and goals (p. 43). Thus, linguistic expressions shift and converge as the narrative is being recounted. These shifts may occur because the narrators may perceive and evaluate themselves and others in the tension evoked by the conflict. For instance, Simmel (1955) described the conflict process as one aimed at resolving opposing perspectives. He used the phrase “divergent dualisms” to explain contrasting or opposing perceptions, convictions, forces, or aims that set one individual or group at cross-purposes with another. In the case of this study, these oppositions can also be with the clients, the therapist, or oppositions related to how the clients perceive themselves in their depressed state as opposed to others who are not suffering from this condition.

Leung (2002: 2) discussed conflict in discourse and noted that definitions vary. For instance, Leung cited Pomerantz’s (1984) definition of conflict as disagreement, Eisenberg and Garvey’s (1981) as an adversative episode, and Schifffrin’s (1985) as oppositional argument. These definitions suggest that although a narrative may have a coherent and cohesive structure and conflicts may have a beginning and end point, linguistic features may exhibit variation in conflictful talk.

Conflict episodes may contain adversarial incidents that include the narrator, in this case, the client, or an audience external to the narrator. In recounting an event, the narrator may also quarrel and debate with herself about the behavior of the entities in

the narratives, altercations that occurred during their depressed state, conflicts in which the narrator was involved, etc. Grimshaw (1990: 11) posited that in conflict narratives, we may even find that “culture/speech community members also recognize (that) other varieties of conflict and conflict-related talk such as apologies, gossip, insults...can be embedded in various sorts of conflictful interaction...” Labov and Fanshel (1977) argued that

“[c]rucial actions in establishing coherence of sequencing in conversation are not such speech acts as requests or assertions, but rather challenges, defenses, and retreats, which have to do with the status of the participants, their rights and obligations, and their changing relationships in terms of social organization. We define *interaction* as action which affects (alters or maintains) the relations of the self and others in face-to-face communication,” (p. 58-59).

In sum, in oral narratives of personal experience in which a narrator, a client who suffers from depression, recounts a conflictful^v event to a hearer (the therapist), the client may be positioning the therapist as an ally, supporter, approver, sympathizer or adversary. In addition, over the course of the narrative, the client may allege events that are presented and re-represented in various ways, and these ways may be confusing, questioning, obscuring, or hedging, suggesting that this type of discourse is dynamic. That is, talking about one’s problems and the internal state of mind of the depressed speaker, is in itself, conflict-related. Wortham (2001) argued that narrators do more than represent themselves; they transform themselves. And in this transformation and environment of contentiousness, it is suggested here that within the two MIs, narratives should exhibit changes in the use of verbs’ TMA, changes in DARN-C-related verbs, and a decrease in conflict-related utterances as MI sessions progress. Section 5.2.3 explains how conflict narratives were analyzed.

5. The study

Towards the end of 2006, I initiated a three-year research study in collaboration with the psychiatry department of a well-known university medical institution in New Jersey. The department had established a Clínica Latina, a center that provided treatment to Spanish-speaking individuals who had been diagnosed with depression. After receiving Institutional Review Board approval from the university medical facility where the treatment and practices took place, as well as the university where I currently teach and conduct research, a pilot study was initiated. The study investigated several linguistic variables that could operate as indicators of adherence or commitment to treatment. Twenty-two digital MI audio files were transcribed, coded and analyzed from September 2006 to July 2007. This current study was constructed based on the initial findings of data gathered during that period.

^v In the discursive context of the MIs obtained for this study, disputing or “wranglings” (Brenneis 1988) did not occur with the therapist. That is, the conflictful narratives that were produced were related to how the client expressed her helplessness, frustrations, and powerlessness when in depression and in relation to her work, economic situation, family, and her own persona, etc.

5.1. Participants

Data from eight native Spanish-speaking individuals were collected for this new research project. The new participants, two males and six females, produced sixteen MI from August 2007 to December 2008. The participants' countries of origin included Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Mexico and Colombia. Their ages ranged from 25 to over 40 years, and they were residents of New Jersey who had lived in the state eight to twenty-four years.

5.2. Methodology

This study used a mixed-method approach to explain the changes in utterances that occurred between MIs. Since one cannot examine client language by using only a quantitative, corpus-based approach without also taking into account the discursive context in which certain linguistic features are produced, the study also used a qualitative approach. The study was first guided by a macro quantitative analysis of several aspects of the verbs (TMA and Darn-C semantic features) and utterances produced in conflict narratives. The purpose of this quantitative analysis was to explore group tendencies. A qualitative analysis was pursued following Schegloff (1993). Schegloff has cautioned researchers that a single case is also a quantity. Therefore, the study employs a micro-qualitative analysis for two reasons: First, to show participant utterances that exemplify the group tendencies. Second, to illustrate the utterances that may not be exemplified by group tendencies yet implicitly or explicitly are related to change talk.

Two 45-minute MIs were digitally recorded by practitioners at the medical institution. The MIs were separate from the therapy routine the participant attended. To guarantee privacy, I was not present for either of the interviews so the participant could feel comfortable speaking openly with the practitioner about his or her condition. This also ensured neutrality in my analysis of the discourse and the construction and selection of the linguistic and social variables. The digital audio files were transcribed and coded by two research assistants who have worked under my supervision for the past three years. To ensure that inter-rater reliability was high, one research assistant coded the social or non-linguistic variables such as age, Spanish language variety, etc. while the other coded the linguistic variables. Thus, inter-rater reliability with regard to the coding process was not a concern. *Intra*-rater reliability however was a concern with regard to the coding of the linguistic variables. Since only one assistant coded the linguistic variables, a Cohen's kappa coefficient was not used. Rather, a simple percent agreement calculation was used. One reliability test was performed during two separate intervals of data coding. The first yielded 93.7% coding accuracy while the second, 97%. This latter frequency was obtained after realigning the coding practices of the only research assistant who was assigned to code the linguistic variables.

Every verb and its context were the main unit under examination in this study. Thus, every verb produced by a participant was categorized, coded, and entered in the analysis. Since the study also included a variable that was named 'topic and focus', this independent variable enabled the researcher to identify instances in which a verb was produced in an utterance related to topics such as medication, family, the depression, etc. Therefore, for instance, if a participant produced a narrative with a clause about

their depression that contained two types of verbs such as ‘ability’ and ‘desire’, each verb was coded separately under the category corresponding to its respective topic and focus: Depression. If, on the other hand, one verb’s clause was about medication and the other verb’s clause was related to therapy, then each verb received a distinct topic: ‘medication’ for the first, and ‘therapy’ in the case of the second verb in the clause. This enabled the researcher to capture and categorize every instance in which a verb was produced under a specific topic.

The study contained ten linguistic variables and six social variables. The following variables were coded for the linguistic analysis:

Linguistic variables:

1. Verbs’ TMA: present, imperfect, preterit, finite verbs, four moods, compound verbs with *puedo* ‘can’, non-finite indefinite verbs such as: *para yo hacerlo* ‘for me to do it’, infinitive and gerund forms.
2. Performative verbs: Commissives, expressives, declaratives, directives, assertives, and non-performatives.
3. The context of the verb: Verbs in [+conflict/negation] or [-conflict/negation] clauses. Verbs coded as [+conflict/negation] were those that appeared in narratives that contained contradictions, contentiousness, refusals, debates, complaining, negation with ‘no’, and arguments with ‘self’. Verbs coded as [-conflict/negation] or positive clauses such as hope, good feeling, future, willingness, interest in becoming better, and the absence of utterance with negation such as *nunca* ‘never’, *no* ‘no’, etc.
4. Adherence to treatment and commitment clauses such as: *La depresión es mala* ‘the depression is bad’, *la medicina me ayuda* ‘the medication helps’.
5. DARN-C verbs in clauses: Verbs in ‘commitment’ clauses such as *estoy de acuerdo* ‘I agree’, *continuaré* ‘I will continue’, *haré lo posible* ‘will do what’s possible’; ‘Desire’ verbs such as *deseo* ‘I wish’, ‘hope’, ‘want’; ‘Ability’ verbs such as *soy capaz* ‘I’m capable’, *tengo ganas* ‘I want to’, *soy fuerte* ‘I’m strong’; ‘Need’ verbs such as *necesito* ‘I need’, *tengo que...* ‘I have to’, *me urge* ‘It is urgent that ...’; ‘Readiness’ verbs such as *estoy lista* ‘I’m ready’, *tengo todo* ‘I have everything’, *estoy dispuesto* ‘I’m mentally disposed’; ‘Reason’ verbs with clauses ‘porque...’ ‘because...’, justification or motives, incentive-type clauses.
6. Topic and focus of utterance such as: *Yo* ‘I’, *la familia* ‘the family’, *la terapia* ‘the therapy’, *la medicina* ‘the medication’, *la sesión* ‘the session’, *la depresión* ‘the depression’.
7. Syntactic matching of participant’s utterances with those of the practitioner’s.
8. Type of utterances: single declarative, narrative, or the utterance is unrelated to treatment.

Non-linguistic variables:

1. MI sequence: first, second
2. Location of the verb in the MI: first, second, third quarter
3. Speaker’s gender: female, male
4. Speaker’s age: 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s or above
5. Speaker’s origin: Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Argentina, etc.

6. Speaker's years in the US: <10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 50>, born in the US.
7. Speaker's education: elementary, secondary, technical school, university (completed or not), incomplete elementary, incomplete high or middle school.
8. Speaker's adherence/commitment rates to treatment: This variable considered commitment by examining the participants' adherence to treatment as reported by the clinic. The clinic measured adherence by evaluating medication intake and visits to therapy sessions. Adherence/commitment frequencies were coded as: <20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, etc.

With regard to the quantitative analysis, this article reports only on the following independent variables: The verbs' TMA, the semantic aspect of the DARN-C verbs, and the context of [+/-conflict/negation] narratives. The first and second MI was considered the dependent variable. For the qualitative analysis, the verbs were analyzed in their respective contexts. To exemplify the tendencies, excerpts of a participant's discourse are included and discussed with tables.

5.2.1. How the verbs' TMA were coded:

Silva-Corvalán (1984) has suggested that each verbal form does not have specific meaning if analyzed in isolation or is decontextualized. She argued that each verbal form has a general referential meaning that determines its co-occurrence with other forms and its use within a given communicative event (p. 229). Thus, to tackle an examination of how speakers express change, transition to change, or commitment to change, the study addressed not only the production of verbs tenses and their semantic categories, but also the discourse in which the verbs were produced.

Twenty verb categories and adverbial time clauses were entered in the coding process. The verbs were categorized as present, preterit, imperfect, and future (including periphrastic and perfect future) in addition to those mentioned in the previous section. However, during initial statistical runs, a verb category produced in a low frequency was re-coded and merged into one category whenever possible. For instance, verbs categorized in the future and periphrastic future (i.e., *iré* ('will go') vs. *voy a ir* ('going to go'), which were only produced in 4.4% of the verbs of the entire corpus, were re-coded as 'future forms'. Scholars have reported that go-futures can and are often used to describe situations in the indeterminate and potentially distant future (Fleischman, 1983; Silva-Corvalán 1984, 1994, among others).

5.2.2. How DARN-C verbs were coded:

The following examples illustrate how the underlined verbs were categorized under the semantic verb type of the DARN-C variable. These examples were extracted from MI (P002/2007):

Desire: *Yo lo que quisiera lograr es quitarme esta depresión que tengo y a lo mejor*

casarme y ser feliz con una mujer.

[What I would like to achieve is to remove this depression that [I] have and probably marry and be happy with a woman.]

Ability: *...de repente se me quita el ánimo de estar con ella...*

[...suddenly [I] lose my spirit to be with her...]

Readiness: *Yo podría decir que estoy casi listo pero me siento inseguro* [I can say I'm almost ready but I feel insecure].

Reasons: *Porque con la depresión yo he tenido fracasos con mujeres por eso.*

[Because with the depression I have had failures with women because of that.]

Need: *Ahora tengo que hincarme por la mañana y por la noche.*

[Now [I] have to inject myself in the morning and at night.]

Commitment: *...que digo me voy a tomar la medicina a ver si me ayuda.*

[...that [I] say [I] am going to take the medicine to see if it helps me.]

Not DARN-C verbs: This category referred to verbs of mental activity^{vi} such as *saber* 'to know' and *notar* 'to recognize'; estimative verbs such as *considero* 'I consider' and *creo* 'I think'; verbs of state, such as *estoy* 'I am' and *vivo* 'I live'; feeling-related verbs, such as *siento* 'I feel' and its reflexive '*me siento*'. Verbs considered irrelevant to the study, (i.e., external or physical activity) were also placed in the category of the 'Not DARN-C'.

5.2.3. How the [+/-conflict/negation] narratives of the verbs were coded:

This study analyzes the context of the narrative produced by the participant and determines whether the context in which the verb appears is conflictful [+conflict] and contains negation [+negation]. Since in MIs the client is doing most of the talking and the main goal of the MI as defined by Rollnick and Miller (1995) is to help clients explore and resolve ambivalence, the conflictful discourse cannot be defined as co-constructed dispute language (Brenneis 1988). Rather, the study examines the narrative's context to determine whether there is a presence of conflict in the narrative using several of Brenneis (1996) principles regarding conflict.

The follow examples illustrate how the verbs' contexts were coded in accordance the presence or absence of conflict in the narrative, taking into account the hypothesis that utterances in MI will contain disputes with 'self' as well as refusals, debates, complaining, negation with 'no', 'never', etc. In speaking of the medication, participant MI (P002/2007) produced the following examples:

[+conflict/negation]: *...Sí, a veces lo pienso y digo, Ah, no tomo nada.*

[...Yes, sometimes [I] think of it and say "Ah, [I] won't take anything.]

[-conflict/negation] *...como que me calmo un poquito.*

[...like I calm down a bit.]

^{vi} This article does not address the results of the verbs categorized as accomplishments, external activity, states, etc.

5.2.4. Coding for the location of the verb:

The verbs were coded in two distinct ways: The segment in which they appeared in each MI, and whether they appeared in the first or second MI. For the location of the verb within an MI segment, verbs that appeared in the first 15 minutes of the MI were coded as ‘first quarter’, the next set of verbs which were produced between 16 to 30 minutes were coded as ‘second quarter’, and so forth. The MIs were digitally recorded in separate sessions and dates. Therefore, transcriptions were coded by ‘MI sequence’, one or two.

For the analysis, the study relied on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a well-known statistical model used by Flores-Ferrán (2007) and Otheguy, Zentella, Livert (2007) among others, who examined the use of pronominal expression and other linguistic variables among several Spanish varieties. The scholars have noted that SPSS provides univariate analyses (i.e., means and percentages), bivariate analyses (i.e., correlations), and multivariate analyses (i.e., multiple regression and logistic regression), compared to that of the program VARBRUL^{vii}, a statistical tool used in sociolinguistics.

5.3. Research questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. Are changes evident in the use of verbs’ TMA from the first MI to the second?
2. At the micro level (between MIs), are changes evident in the use of verbs’ TMA and DARN-C verbs?
3. Is there a correlation between the appearance of DARN-C verbs and adherence/commitment to treatment frequencies in MI?
4. Does the presence of conflict in narratives correlate to adherence/commitment to treatment frequencies?

6. The results

This section first discusses the quantitative analysis with the purpose of illustrating group tendencies. After Table 2, the micro-analysis of discourse is integrated in the discussion with the purpose of exemplifying the general tendencies.

The study contained 11,849 verbs. The results are presented in two sections. The first section discusses the groups’ tendencies with regard to the production of verbs in the MIs, while the second focuses on the relationship of semantic verb type to adherence/commitment reported by the clinic. Excerpts of the interviews are presented after several table to exemplify the tendencies uncovered by the quantitative analysis.

Table 1. The gross frequencies of the distribution of verbs in MI according to Tense, Mood, Aspect (TMA) produced by all participants (n=11,849)

^{vii} The program commonly used for variationist research in sociolinguistics. Bayley (2002) notes that in a comparison of both VARBRUL and SPSS, both perform similar operations. For further discussion on sociolinguistic and quantitative methods, see Morrison (2007).

	Frequency	Percent
Present	5618	47.4
Preterit	1678	14.2
Imperfect past	1175	9.9
Infinitive	883	7.5
Cond/Sub forms	601	5.1
Future forms	517	4.4
Haber+Vb forms	494	4.2
Puedo+Vb	376	3.2
Other (i.e., Gerund)	358	3.0
Imperative	149	1.3
Total	11849	100.0

Table 1 shows the raw frequencies. It indicates that of the 11,849 verbs produced in the study, the highest frequency of usage was that of present tense verbs (47.4%) and the second highest was the preterit form (14.2%). The imperfect tense was produced in 9.9% of the verbs. Verbs such as the conditional and the subjunctive were produced in only 5.1% of the verbs. Infinitive verb forms which do not encode for completion of an event were used in 7.5% of the verbs.

In the next table these data are contextualized according to MI. Table 2 shows how the verbs' TMA were produced according to the MI.

Table 2. The distribution of verbs' TMA according to the first and second MI (n=11,849)

Verbs TMA	Interview MI	
	First	Second
Present	46.2%	48.8%
Preterit	15.6%	12.6%
Imperfect	10.7%	9.1%
Infinitive	7.1%	7.9%
Cond/Sub forms	5.1%	5.0%
Haber forms+vb	4.2%	4.1%
Future forms	3.6%	5.2%
Other (i.e., gerund)	3.4%	2.6%
<i>Puedo</i> +vb	3.0%	3.3%
Imperative	1.2%	1.4%
Total	100%	100%

($p \leq .0001$)

The Pearson Chi-Square value resulted in ($p < .0001$)^{viii} when comparing the verbs' TMA and their distribution among the two MIs. This value suggests that the relationship between the verbs' TMA and their appearance in the first and second MI is statistically significant. Table 2 shows that only several verbs' TMA frequencies

^{viii} Unless otherwise indicated, for all tables in the article, the Chi-square values are ($p < .0001$).

changed between MIs. The preterit decreased in use from the first (15.6%) to the second MI (12.6%). A similar pattern was found with the use of the imperfect.

Conversely, with future verb forms, an increase in frequencies occurred from the first MI (3.6%) to the second (5.2%). Verbs produced Cond/Sub moods remained stable between MIs. Similarly, verbs in the other categories remained slightly stable from one MI to another.

To illustrate the use of the particular tenses, excerpts from one of the participants of the study will be woven throughout the discussion.

(1) In the following excerpt, the client speaks of her bad financial situation and being unable to count on anyone; her helplessness.

Context: Conflict narrative segment
Topic: Financial problems
Verbs: Chain of present tense verbs
Features: Redundant negations

P: *Pero económicamente no tengo amistades, porque para eso usted sabe que aquí nadie le da nada a nadie...* (Participant 003 MI#1 8/10/07 Line 50)

[But economically, I don't have friends, because for that, you know that here no one gives nothing to no one.]

This excerpt which was produced in the first MI illustrates how the client used the present tense to describe her current financial situation and, at the same time, used redundant negative features *no tengo* 'I don't have', *nadie* 'no one', *da nada* 'gives nothing' and *nadie* 'no one' to express her helplessness.

(2) In this excerpt below, the client continues to speak of her financial situation. In it we can observe shifts in verb tense use. (Participant 003 MI#1 8/10/07 Line 58)

Context: Conflict narrative segment
Topic: Financial problems
Verbs: Changes from present perfect *ha afectado*, *ha bajado*, chain of imperfect preterit tenses *estaba*, *sacaba*, infinitive *al verme*.
Features: Speech act: complaining, persistence in current negative situation

P: *Bueno eso me ha afectado porque yo estaba acostumbrada a ganarme el cheque semanal y yo sacaba cuatrocientos y pico de dólares semanal, y al verme así pues eso, como que me ha bajado mucho la autoestima.* (Participant 003 MI#1 8/10/07 Line 158)

[Well that has affected me because I was used to earning a weekly check and I would withdraw four hundred or so dollars every week, and seeing me like this, like that has decreased my self esteem.]

In (2), the client used the present perfect and imperfect preterit to describe her previous financial activity. Later she shifts to the present tense to describe how her current economic condition affects her self esteem and her powerlessness.

(3) In the following excerpt, the client discusses how nothing helps with the medication.

Context: Conflict narrative segment
 Topic: Medication topic shifts to seeking spiritual help
 Verbs: String of present tense verbs and a shift to gerund form *orando* ‘praying’, a non-finite form.
 Features: Speech act of suggestion; advising

P: *Porque nada más no es ayuda con la medicina. La medicina ayuda, pero para combatir esos problemas, hay que buscar ayuda espiritualmente, orando puede irse eso.* (Participant 003 MI#2 8/20/07 Line 193)

[P: Because nothing else helps with the medication. The medication helps, but to combat problems, one has to look for spiritual help, praying can eliminate that [depression].]

Example (3) was produced during the second MI. In it, we find insight into the change that took place from the first MI to the second. For instance, we find a change in the manner in which the client discusses medication. While she admits that nothing else helps with the medication and that the medicine in itself does indeed help, the client produces a suggestion or advice *hay que buscar ayuda espiritualmente* using the imperative and impersonal *hay* ‘one has to’ and infinitive form *buscar* ‘to look’ in an advisory capacity. Then she shifts to gerund form ‘praying’, namely, constant praying, can eliminate her depression. Therefore, she offers a glimpse into how she needs to pray and search for spiritual assistance, not only use medication.

Table 3. The distribution of DARN-C verbs in the entire corpus

Semantics of Vb	Frequency	Percent
Reasons	2433	20.5%
Need	834	7.0%
Ability	679	5.7%
Desire	360	3.0%
Commitment	272	2.3%
Readiness	208	1.8%
Not DARN-C	7063	59.6%
Total	11,849	100%

In Table 3 we note that 59.6% of the verbs in the corpus were not related to the DARN-C categories. Nonetheless, the table shows that participants produced ‘reason’ verbs in 20.5% of the entire corpus, while ‘need’ appeared in 7.0% of the verbs. The verbs with the lowest frequency of production were ‘readiness’ (1.8%).

(4) In this excerpt, the client discusses how nothing helps with the medicine.

Context: Conflict narrative segment

Topic: Illness: Diabetes, emotional issues and reasons for medication
 Verbs: String of present tense verbs in ‘reason’ clauses
 Features: Hypothetical using present tense (two clauses)

P: *Bueno, es lo que usted dice, la medicina es parte de ayudarse porque si, un ejemplo, yo sufro de diabetes, y si yo no me controlo con la diabetes pues puede llegar a darme hasta un ataque.* (Participant 003 MI#2 8/20/07 Line 203)

T: Mjm.

P: *Porque la diabetes es algo bien delicado. Y la diabetes mía es como emocional. Si yo sufro emocionalmente pues se sube.* (Participant 003 MI#2 8/20/07 Line 206-207)

[P: Well, it is like you say, the medication is part of getting better because if, an example, I suffer from diabetes, and if I don’t control my diabetes well, I can have an attack.

D: Mjm.

P: Because diabetes is something very delicate. And my diabetes is like emotional. If I suffer emotionally, well it rises.]

In (4), which was produced in the second MI, we can observe how the client provides reasons for taking the medication. She produces two hypothetical situations using present tense verbs instead of the expected conditional or subjunctive verb forms. In the first, she produced a cause and effect relationship between clauses in *y si yo no me controlo con la diabetes pues, puede llegar a darme hasta un ataque* ‘If I don’t control my diabetes well, I can have an attack’. Thus, the client is able to project, speculate, and express how important it is to control her diabetes. In the second, while she initiates her reason statement with a *porque* ‘because’ clause, the ‘if’ clause *si yo sufro* ‘if I suffer’ situates a hypothetical context that reinforces her interest in taking the medication. In this case, it is also noted that the client could have used the conditional verb tense, *Si yo sufro, entonces subiría...* ‘If I suffer, then it would rise’. Thus, in this excerpt we can find multiple features that point to how change is being expressed implicitly: the use of reason clauses, present tense to explain mental/physical conditions, and a change in topic away from helplessness: She recognizes the cause and effects of controlling her condition.

Table 4. Group tendencies regarding DARN-C verbs distributed according to the first and second MI (n=11,849)

	MI First	MI Second	Total %
Commitment	41.5%	58.5%	100.0%
Desire	57.2%	42.8%	100.0%
Ability	48.7%	51.3%	100.0%
Need	53.0%	47.0%	100.0%
Readiness	61.5%	38.5%	100.0%
Reasons	52.0%	48.0%	100.0%

Not DARN-C	53.6%	46.4%	100.0%
			($p < .0001$)

As expected, the DARN-C verb frequencies vary in Table 4. There was an evident increase in the frequencies in which ‘commitment’ and ‘ability’ verbs were produced from the first to the second MI. However, there was a decrease in the frequencies in which ‘desire’, ‘need’, ‘readiness’ and ‘reasons’ were produced between MIs. This tendency suggests that changes are occurring between MI sessions. As ‘commitment’ and ‘ability’ verbs increase, ‘desire’, ‘need’, ‘readiness’, and ‘reasons’ are less likely to be expressed.

(5) In this excerpt, the client discusses her need for the medication in the second MI.

Context:	Conflict narrative segment
Topic:	Commitment and ability towards medication
Verbs:	Present tense
Features:	Negation redundancy; adverbials and redundancy to express obligation, mental verb, use of <i>me</i> , the reflexive pronoun

P: *Sí. Yo reconozco que sin la medicina, no puedo, no puedo seguir, obligatoriamente tengo que tomármela.* (Participant 003 MI#2 8/20/07 Line 239)

[P: I recognize that without the medication, I can't, I can't continue, obligatorily I have to take it.]

Several observations can be made regarding excerpt (5) that contribute to how commitment language is expressed by the client during her second MI. First, the client uses a mental verb *reconozco* ‘recognize’ to indicate that she currently acknowledges what she has to do. Second, her persistence is manifested through the redundant uses of the verb *puedo* ‘can’ when she expresses that she cannot stop taking the medication in *no puedo, no puedo seguir* ‘I cannot continue’ [without the medication]. Third, there is also semantic redundancy in the following verb *tengo que* ‘have to’, which is accompanied by adverbial *obligatoriamente* ‘obligatorily’. Fourth, the client in expressing how she must take her medication, does not use *tengo que tomarla* ‘I have to take it’. Rather, she used the reflexive pronoun *me* in *tomármela* ‘I must take myself it’. This utterance is suggesting that she has agency and the capacity to recognize that someone (herself or something else) is obligating her to take the medication. Thus, unlike in the first MI where the client’s powerlessness seems to prevail, in this MI there appears to be more confidence and determination exhibited in her talk.

To address one of the research questions of the study, an examination of the adherence to medication frequencies and the use of DARN-C verbs had to be conducted. The clinic reported that the eight participants produced distinct frequencies in their adherence to medication. The clinic reported that four participants exhibited an adherence/commitment to treatment in frequencies of 97.5%, 93.0%, 95.2% and 99.4%. However, the other four participants were reported to have adherence/commitment rates of 78.7%, 52.9%, 26.9% and 14.3%. In the ensuing section, the DARN-C verbs use is examined along with the clients’ adherence to medication tendencies.

Table 5. DARN-C verbs and adherence frequencies according to MI (n=11,849)

DARN-C	MI	Adherence/commitment %				Sig
		20s or less	50s	70s	90s	
Commitment	First	62.7%	0%	27.5%	37.2%	<i>.0001</i>
	Second	37.3%	100.0%	72.5%	62.8%	
Desire	First	67.0%	61.1%	61.2%	50.8%	<i>.055</i>
	Second	33.0%	38.9%	38.8%	49.2%	
Ability	First	63.1%	56.8%	34.4%	44.3%	<i>.0001</i>
	Second	36.9%	43.2%	65.6%	55.7%	
Need	First	63.9%	55.9%	62.6%	46.5%	<i>.0001</i>
	Second	36.1%	44.1%	37.4%	53.5%	
Readiness	First	73.3%	44.4%	83.3%	53.7%	<i>.010</i>
	Second	26.7%	55.6%	16.7%	46.3%	
Reasons	First	50.1%	73.1%	62.0%	47.8%	<i>.0001</i>
	Second	49.9%	26.9%	38.0%	52.2%	
None above	First	67.6%	60.9%	64.2%	43.2%	<i>.0001</i>
	Second	32.4%	39.1%	35.8%	56.8%	

The Chi-square values differ for several of the DARN-C categories in Table 5. For instance, ‘commitment’, ‘ability’, ‘need’ and ‘reason’ verbs were each ($p < .0001$), a value which provides stronger statistical evidence than that found for the ‘desire’ and ‘readiness’ categories, values represented by ($p < .055$) and ($p < .010$), respectively.

First, two general observations were made regarding Table 5. Participants whose adherence/commitment to treatment was in the <20% category decreased the use of all DARN-C verb categories from the first to second MI and, the gap between the frequencies is large. Second, participants with adherence to treatment with frequencies in the 50s, 70s, and 90s ranges significantly increased the use of ‘commitment’ verbs from the first MI to the second.

But what are tendencies of participants who were reported as having adherence/commitment above 70%? Two observations can be made:

1. ‘Commitment’ and ‘ability’ verb frequencies increased between the first and second MI. They approximately doubled and tripled.
2. ‘Readiness’ verb frequency decreased from one MI to another.

This increase in commitment and ability is depicted in the client’s excerpt (5). In other words, this particular client’s readiness for change decreased because she had already committed, engaged in the decision, or recognized her need to take medication.

(6) In this excerpt extracted from the second MI, the client discusses her need for the medication.

Context: Conflict narrative segment
 Topic: Commitment to medication
 Verbs: Present tense
 Features: Mental verb *sé*, redundant negation, redundant forms to express

obligation, reflexive pronoun, contradiction

P: *Yo lo sé que sin esa pastilla yo no puedo estar. Yo sé que no puedo...tengo obligatoriamente que tomarme la medicina aunque yo no quiera.* (Participant 003 MI#2 8/20/07 Line 235)

[P: I know that without that pill I can't be. I know that I can't...I have to obligatorily take the medication even if I may not want to.]

Although the client is cognizant of her need to take the medication, she insists by redundantly producing the phrases *Yo lo sé* 'I know it' and *Yo sé* 'I know'. The fact that her adherence to medication is relatively low, contradicts most of her previous statement in which she indicates that she knows she needs to take the medication. In the final segment of the excerpt, a key phrase *aunque yo no quiera* 'even though I may not want to', is relevant. First, it shows some ambiguity in that she admits to not necessarily wanting to take the medication. Nonetheless, this latter utterance characterizes her level of commitment. Second, she contradicts the previous utterance as she expressed that she feels compelled to take the medication, almost forced, and as if she has no choice. Third, she acknowledges and convinces herself that it is obligatory for her to take it by using the verb with the reflexive pronoun *me* in the verb *tomar-me* 'me take it' as opposed to *tomarla* 'take it'. The morphological ending *-me* draws attention and focus to her as the taker of the medication. If she would have used *tomarla*, the agency and focus would not be the same. Thus, we find that her statements wax and wane between what she knows she needs to do to feel better and what she really would like to do.

In the following section, the data with regard to conflict-related narratives and how they were evidenced in the MIs.

Table 6. The distribution of verbs in [+/-conflict/negation] contexts according to MI and adherence/commitment frequencies (n=11,849)

Context	adherence/commitment %				
	Interview	<20s	50s	70s	90s
[+conflict/negation]	First	68.1%	62.3%	53.3%	47.8%
	Second	31.9%	37.7%	46.7%	52.2%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
[-conflict/negation]	First	54.4%	48.0%	72.7%	45.3%
	Second	45.6%	52.0%	27.3%	54.7%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
None above	First	62.7%	67.6%	60.3%	31.9%
	Second	37.3%	32.4%	39.7%	68.1%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

($p < .0001$)

The data in Table 6 confirms the hypothesis that suggested participants with low adherence/commitment frequencies would produce more verbs in [+conflict/negation]

clauses. Namely, participants reported with adherence/commitment frequencies of <20s and 50s categories produced more [+conflict/negation] clauses (68.1% and 62.3%, respectively) than participants in the 70s and 90s category of adherence/commitment (53.3% and 47.8% respectively). Thus, it is plausible that one characteristic of participants with lower adherence/commitment frequencies is that they exhibit a stronger tendency to express more [+conflict/negation] utterances as illustrated in several excerpts.

Despite this observation, a further examination of the table shows that three groups decreased their production of verbs in [+conflict/negation] clause types from one MI to the next, regardless of the adherence/commitment frequencies. Participants with adherence/commitment frequencies in the category of <20 significantly decreased the use verbs in [+conflict/negation] clauses from 68.1% to 31.9%. A similar tendency was found among participants with adherence/commitment frequencies in the 50s and 70s ranges. However, participants with adherence/commitment ranges in the 90s mildly increased the use of verbs in [+conflict/negation] clauses in the second MI from 47.8% to 52.2%, an observation for which an explanation cannot be provided. Yet, this group exhibited the lowest frequency of verbs in [+conflict/negation] of all four groups, as well as the highest shift in change within MI with regard to the use of verbs in positive clauses: 45.3% to 54.7%.

The next section discusses the outcomes of a logistic regression analysis which was conducted with the purposes of determining the strength of the linguistic variables under examination in the study. Table 7 shows how the variables were ranked according to their strength.

Table 7. Hierarchies of variables related to first and second MI (logistic regression) (n=11,849)

Variable	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
<i>Rank DARN-C verbs</i>	22.838	.001	
1 Commitment	7.104	.008	1.365
2 Ability	3.354	.067	1.153
3 Need	1.177	.278	1.078
4 Reasons	1.869	.172	1.070
5 Desire	3.800	.051	.827
6 Readiness	9.834	.002	.673
<i>Verbs' TMA</i>	43.902	.000	
1 Future forms	10.210	.001	1.331
2 Imperative	1.327	.249	1.189
3 Infinitive	2.327	.127	1.108
4 Present	1.153	.283	1.041
5 Puedo+vb	.140	.709	1.038
6 Cond/Sub	.014	.906	.991
7 Haber forms+vb	.024	.878	.987
8 Imperfect	6.262	.012	.859
9 Preterit	14.940	.000	.814
<i>Clause type</i>	57.532	.000	
1 [-conflict/negation]	1.044	.307	1.029
2 [+conflict/negation]	57.511	.000	.820

The hierarchical ranking of the independent variables are listed for each category according to the value in the Exp(B) column. An Exp(B) value above 1.0 increases the odds of appearance of the independent variable within the second MI. A value of Exp(B) below 1.0 reduces the odds of using that variable within the second MI.

First, with regard to the DARN-C verbs, the variable of ‘commitment’ verbs in clauses had the highest probability of appearance in the second MI than any other semantic verb type. Second, within the category of the verbs’ TMA, future forms had a stronger probability of appearing in the second MI than other verb forms. Finally, clauses that were absent of conflict [-conflict/negation] had the highest odds of appearance in the second MI than [+conflict/negation] clauses.

7. Summary

This study set out to examine several aspects of verbs in Spanish and the presence to conflict talk with the purpose of understanding how change and commitment/adherence to treatment is implicitly expressed by Spanish-speaking adults who have been diagnosed with depression. Using quantitative and qualitative analyses, the study examined the verbs’ TMA, the semantic verb type (DARN-C verbs in clauses) and the context in which the verb was produced in [+/-conflict/negation] clauses.

One of the questions the study sought to answer was whether a change would occur in the use of the verbs’ TMA from the first MI to the next. Two tendencies were uncovered in response to this question. First, participants reduced past-tense talk from the first to the second MI. However, the distinction with regard to the verbs’ telicity, the use of the preterit as opposed to the imperfect was found irrelevant to the changes that took place between MIs. Or said differently, both these past tense verb forms were produced in lower frequencies in the second MI than in the first suggesting that clients moved away from talking about their past in the second MI. Second, with regard to future verb forms, the participants spoke more of future events in the second MI than in the first. Therefore, the group tendencies show that change in talk did take place. Both these changes imply that the MIs had a positive effect on the clients.

Another question dealt with the type of changes that emerge at the micro level of the discourse with regard to the verbs’ TMA, the DARN-C verbs and the presence of conflict in narratives. The qualitative analysis was able to capture instances in which a participant’s utterances were mediated by her need to take medication, accept medication, and her sense of obligation to take the medication. The study found instances of multiple negations in conflict narratives, redundant uses of verb tenses, shifts in verb tenses, uses of hypothetical contexts, and the use of clitic and reflexive pronouns to express emphasis, to sound convincing, to assert a position, and, at times, to express agency and control. Changes in the use of several of these forms were attested between the first and second MI. The observations made in the qualitative analysis also suggest that there is evidence to support the notion of a transition toward change, a change that is mediated by motivational interviewing.

With regard to the use of DARN-C verbs, the study found that commitment verbs were more evident in the second MI. However, commitment appeared stronger in participants whose adherence was reported in the high range of the adherence/commitment frequencies reported by the clinic, a finding that responds to the

third question of the study that asked whether there was a correlation between the production of DARN-C verbs and adherence to treatment frequencies.

The study also addressed whether the presence of conflict in narratives could be related to adherence/commitment frequencies. It examined how the presence of conflict in narratives emerged between the MIs. A pendulum effect was found. Namely, as adherence/commitment frequencies diminished, clauses that contained contentiousness, refusals, complaints and negation-related forms increased. That is, the presence of conflict in narratives was more evident in clients whose adherence to medication was relatively low. The study also showed that the presence of conflict in narratives seemed more heightened in the first MI rather than the second. This tendency is also supportive of the positive effect that the MIs had on the participants as a group. In the qualitative analysis, however, we were able to depict instances in which client waxed and waned or showed ambivalence toward change, a client who had been reported with low levels of commitment to medication intake.

Thus, if we were asked whether changes were attested between the two MIs with regard to verb tenses, the semantic type of the verb, and the presence or absence of conflict, the response would be positive.

8. Discussion

Empirical research has examined the effects of motivational interviews among English-speaking adults in psychotherapeutic treatment. However, a gap in the literature exists with regard to the analysis of psychotherapeutic discourse produced by Spanish speakers in the States. Delgado, Alegría, Cañive, Díaz, Escobar, Koplelowicz, Oquendo, Ruíz, and Vega (2006) have maintained that the delivery of mental health care to Hispanics, now the fastest-growing ethnic minority in the US, has the lowest utilization rate of mental health services (p. 38). Furthermore, research on utterances produced in Spanish Motivational Interviews, to my knowledge, has been largely unattended. Thus, this study advances our understanding of how researchers can investigate the use of several linguistic features in Spanish as they relate to change talk in psychotherapeutic discourse. Given the importance of how clients narrate feelings and events and, bearing in mind that a variety of linguistic constructions are produced during these sessions, this article focused on only three aspects: The verbs' tense mood, and aspect, the semantic verb type, and the presence of conflict in narratives. It compared the presence of these linguistic forms and discourse features within the context of two Motivational Interview sessions. Of the many observations made in the study, two issues are discussed here: Verbs and their importance in researching this type of discourse and, how the presence of conflict can be linguistically determined in these specific discursive interactions.

While Labov and Fanshel (1977) in analyzing a case study concluded that because a client's behavior had not changed, it was equivalent to rejecting therapy, I posit here that gradual behavior change or transitions can be evidenced through an examination of several linguistic forms, in this case, verbs. For instance, and although the study did not examine commitment strength and the illocutionary force of the utterances, an examination of the illocutionary force could have yielded more information regarding speaker intentions. Sbisá (2001) has suggested that an utterance has a certain kind of move in verbal interaction: "a command rather than a question, an assertion rather than an apology, or a promise" (p. 1793). She posited that in order to

fully characterize a speech act which expresses the inner state of a speaker, it would be necessary to take into account the degree of intensity of the act itself (p. 1793). That is, we would have to examine the varying degrees of intensity of features such as explicitness and directness. Thus, I suggest that we also examine verb forms to understand the inner state of the speaker. While linguists have noted that the main function of a verb is to encode time, verbs are rarely examined in the context of psychotherapeutic discourse. Fleischman (1983: 184) has noted that most linguists agree that tense “is deictic category whose primary function is to relate the time of an event predicated in an utterance or discourse to some other time”. The aspectual feature of a verb refers to the internal temporal structure of a situation without specifying a start or end to an activity. Potowski maintains, “it [Aspect] looks at the verb’s activity from the inside without specifying a beginning or an end to the activity” (2005: 123), or ‘the internal temporal contour’ (Comrie, 1985: 6). However, verb tense is also viewed as imprecise and may be best represented by an unlimited set of reference points (Dahl 1985). So why examine verbs in this particular discourse? What value does an examination of verbs have with respect to measuring change? Verbs were examined in this study because, like all aspects of deixis, they make reference to a speaker’s role in an event. Thus, the distinct verb form uses and the shifts, alternations, and redundancies produced in the corpus, suggest that speakers’ intentions were implicitly involved in the expression of change. Levelt (1993: 59) noted that speaker intentions are not merely to convey a message or thought, but the communicative intention always involves this purpose of intention recognition by the hearer. Therefore, while in some instances in the analyses one can account for the *now* and what happened *then* or what will happen *later*, it is the pragmatic interpretation of the use of the verbs in their respective contexts that is of importance in the study. As noted by Silva-Corvalán (1984), decontextualized verbal forms do not have specific meaning. Therefore, each verbal form’s meaning has to be determined by its pragma-linguistic context.

Bercelli, Rossano, and Viaro (2008: 43) have noted that “in recent conversation analytic research on psychotherapy, clients’ responses to therapists’ interventions have often been analyzed in terms of acceptance vs. rejection or resistance”. I posit that rather than only viewing the terms of change as acceptance, rejection, or resistance, researchers can also examine *micro-transitions*.

We learn from this study that when clients relate an experience or talk of troubles, problems, helplessness and powerlessness, we can expect their first interview to recount experiences related to these feelings using negations and conflictful talk. Situations in which the clients initially narrate their condition to the therapist, namely, the uncertainty of their future, their powerlessness, and the lack of control over their lives-- these situations may mediate the presence of conflict-related talk. Muntigl and Hadic Zabala (2008: 193) have noted that the success of psychotherapy depends to some measure on the client’s willingness and ability to talk about self and their experiences. When clients verbalize experiences, Muntigl et al. have noted that clients can take a specific stance on interpersonal matters. In this current study, these interviews showed how the clients construct their problems and how they gradually produce utterances that point to transitions.

While the discursive context of this study was not related to disputes and wrangling between the interlocutors, the study hypothesized that conflict would in some way mediate the discourse produced by participants. It was expected that in this type of conflictful discourse, speakers would oppose or contradict their own utterances, actions,

or themselves. Simmel (1955) argued that “if parties are going to engage in conflict talk, they must select appropriate manners of speech (both codes and prosodic and lexical variants)...” (in Grimshaw, 1990: 4). It is noted here that instances of frustration and aggravation, contradiction, etc. were present in this discursive context. For example, aggravation can be expressed with the use of redundant forms, repeated tries, and reformulations (Kotthoff 1993), tendencies that were attested in the qualitative analysis. Labov and Fanshel (1977) have maintained that the most important step in their analysis of therapeutic discourse was “the determination of the actions that are being performed by speakers through their utterances” (p. 58). They explained that “crucial actions...are not such speech acts as requests and assertions, but rather challenges, defenses, and retreats” (p. 58). Thus, and as depicted in the qualitative analysis, we were able to gather an understanding of these challenges, retreats, aggravations, and defenses in Spanish and how we can perceive change or transition to change.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Alex Interian of UMDNJ for the grant that allowed me to conduct this study, his collaboration throughout these past years, and for sharing his knowledge about psychotherapy and motivational interviewing. This study has also benefited from previous research conducted by Dr. Paul Amrhein whose research guided my some of my thoughts in this article. All errors, of course, remain mine.

References

- Alarcos Llorach, Emilio (1994) *Gramática de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.
- Amrhein, P., W. Miller, C. Yahne, M. Palmer, and L. Fulcher (2003) Client language during motivational interviewing predicts drug use outcomes. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 71.5: 862-878.
- Amrhein, Paul (1992) The comprehension of quasi-performative verbs in verbal commitments: New evidence for componential theories of lexical meaning. *Journal of Memory and Cognition* 31.6: 756-782.
- Audi, Robert (1986) Intending, intentional action, and desire. In J. Marks (ed.), *The ways of desire*. Chicago: Precedent Publishing, pp. 17-38.
- Austin, John (1962) *How to do things with words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bayley, Robert (2002) The study of variable subject personal pronouns: Methodological and analytical issues. Paper presented at NWAV 31, 10-13 October 2002, Stanford University.
- Behrman, Allison (2006) Facilitating behavioral change in voice therapy: The relevance of motivational interviewing. *Journal of Speech-Language Pedagogy* 15: 215-225.
- Bercelli, F., F. Rossano, and M. Viaro (2008) Clients' responses to therapists reinterpretations. In A. Peräkylä, C. Antaki, S. Vehviläinen, I. Leudar (eds.), *Conversation analysis and psychotherapy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 43-61.
- Blum-Kulka, S., J. House, and G. Kasper (1989) (eds.) *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood NJ: Ablex.

- Brenneis, Donald (1996) Telling troubles. In Briggs, C. (ed.), *Disorderly Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 41-51.
- Brenneis, Donald (1988) Language and disputing. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 17: 221-237.
- Bull, W.E., A. Canton, W. Cord, R. Farely, J. Finan, S. Jacobs, R. Jaeger, M. Koons, and B. Tuegel (1947) Modern Spanish verb-form frequencies. *Hispania* 30.4: 451-166.
- Bybee, J.L., R. Perkins, and W. Pagliuca (1994) *The evolution of grammar: Tense, aspect and modality in the language of the world*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Comrie, Bernard (1976) *Aspect*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Dahl, Östen (1985) *Tense and aspect systems*. New York: Blackwell.
- Delgado, P., M. Alegría, J. Cañive, E. Díaz, J. Escobar, A. Kopelowicz, M. Oquendo, P. Ruíz, and W. Vega (2006) Depression and access to treatment among Hispanics. *The Journal of Lifelong Learning in Psychiatry* IV.1: 38-46.
- Eisenberg, Ann R., and Catherine Garvey (1981) Children's use of verbal strategies in resolving conflicts. *Discourse Processes* 4: 149-170.
- Fleischman, Suzanne (1989) Temporal distance: A basic linguistic metaphor. *Studies in Language* 13.1: 1-50.
- Fleischman, Suzanne (1983) From pragmatics to grammar: Diachronic reflections on complex past and futures in Romance. *Lingua* 60: 183-214.
- Flores-Ferrán, Nydia (2007) Is the past really the past: Narrative discourse and verb tense production.. In R. Cameron and K. Potowski (eds.), *Spanish in Contact: Educational, Linguistic, and Social Inquiries*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 297-310.
- García Fernández, L., and M. Martínez-Atienza (2003) La expresión de eventos inconclusos en español. *Revista Española de Lingüística* 33.1: 29-67.
- Gibbs, Raymond, and S.M. Delaney (1987) Pragmatic factors in making and understanding promises. *Discourse Processes* 10: 107-126.
- Gili Gaya, Samuel (1973) *Curso superior de sintaxis española*. Barcelona: Bibliograf.
- Goffman, Erving (1981) *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania.
- Gonçalves, Oscar, and Paulo Machado (1999) Cognitive narrative psychotherapy: Research foundations. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 55.10: 1179-1191.
- Grimshaw, Allen (1990) *Conflict Talk*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hickman, Maya (2004) Coherence, cohesion, and in narrative development. In Stromquist and Verhoven (eds.), *Relating narrative events*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 281-307.
- Interian, A., I. Martínez, P. Guarnaccia, W. Vega, and J. Escobar (2007) A qualitative analysis of the perception of stigma among latinos receiving antidepressants. *Psychiatric Services* 58: 1591-1594.
- Kulik, James, and Patricia Carlino (1987) The effect of verbal commitment and treatment choice in medication compliance in a pediatric setting. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 10: 367-378.
- Labov, William (2001) *Principles of linguistic change: Internal factors*. Massachusetts: Blackwell.

- Labov, William, and David Fanshel (1977) *Therapeutic Discourse: Psychotherapy as conversation*. New York: Academic Press.
- Labov, William, and Joshua Waletzky (1967) The overall structure of narrative. In J. Helm (ed.), *Proceedings of the 1996 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 12-44.
- Laffal, Julius (1987) Concept analysis of language in psychotherapy, In R. Russell (ed.), *Language in psychotherapy: Strategies and discoveries*. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 71-106.
- Lantoff, James (1978) The variable constraints on mood in Puerto Rican Spanish. In M. Suñer (ed.), *Contemporary studies in Romance Linguistics*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, pp. 193-217.
- Lavendra, Beatriz. (1983) Shifting moods in Spanish discourse. In F. Klein (ed.), *Discourse Perspectives on Syntax*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 209-236.
- Leahy, Margaret (2004) Therapy talk: Analyzing therapeutic discourse. *Language, Speech, and Hearing in Schools* 35: 70-81.
- Leung, Santoi (2002) Conflict talk: A discourse analytical perspective. Working Papers TESOL Applied Linguistics Vol. 2 (3). Teachers College: Columbia University.
- Levelt, Willem (1993) *Speaking from Intention to Articulation*. Massachusetts: MIT.
- Miller, William, and Stephen Rollnick (2002) *Motivational interviewing: Preparing people for change*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Mondada, Lorenza (1998) Therapy interactions: Specific genre or “blown up” version of ordinary conversational practices. *Pragmatics* 8.2: 155-165.
- Morrison, Geoffrey (2007) Logistic regression modeling for first- and second-language perception data. In M.J. Solé, P. Prieto, J. Mascaró (eds.), *Segmental and prosodic issues in Romance Philology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 219-236.
- Muntigl, Peter, and Loreley Hadic Zabala (2008) Expandable responses: How clients get prompted to say more during psychotherapy. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 41.2: 187-226.
- Otheguy, Ricardo, Sna C. Zentella, and David Livert (2007) Language and dialect contact in Spanish in New York: Toward the formation of a speech community. *Language* 83.4: 770-802.
- Peräkylä, Anssi, and Charles Antaki (2008) (eds.) *Conversation analysis and psychotherapy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Pomerantz, Anita (1984) Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.), *Structure of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 57-101.
- Potowski, Kim (2005) Tense and aspect in the oral and written narratives of two-way immersion students. *Selected Proceedings of the 6th Conference on the Acquisition Of Spanish and Portuguese as a First Language*. D. Eddington (ed.). Somerville, Massachusetts: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Rollnick Stephen, and William Miller (1995) What is motivational interviewing? *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy* 23: 325-334.
- Russell, Robert (1987) Introduction. In *Language in psychotherapy: Strategies of discovery*. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 109.

- Sbisà, Marina (2001) Illocutionary force and degrees of strength in language use. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33: 1791-1814.
- Searle, John R. (1969) *Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, Emanuel (1993) Reflections on quantification in the study of conversation. *Research on language in social interaction* 25.1: 99-128.
- Schiffrin, Deborah (1990) Management of a co-operative self during argument. In A. Grimshaw (ed.), *Conflict talk*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 241-259.
- Schiffrin, Deborah (1985) Everyday argument: The organization of diversity in talk. In T.A. Van Dijk (ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Vol. 3. London, UK: Academic Press, pp. 35-46.
- Schwenter, Scott (1994) Hot news and the grammaticalization of perfects. *Linguistics* 32: 995-1028.
- Silva-Corvalán, Carmen (1984) A speech event analysis of tense and aspect in Spanish. In P. Baldi (ed.), *Papers from the XIIth Linguistic Symposium on Romance Language*. University Park: Penn State University, pp. 229-251.
- Simmel, Georg (1955) *Conflict and the web of group-affiliations*. New York: The Free Press.
- Terrell, Tracy, and Joan Hooper (1974) A Semantically-based analysis of mood in Spanish. *Hispania* 57: 484-494.
- Torres, Lourdes (1989) Mood selection among New York Puerto Ricans. *International Journal of Sociology of Language* 79: 67-77.
- Van Voorst, Jan (1992) The aspectual semantics of psychological verbs. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 15: 65-92.
- Van Wormer, Katherine (2007) Principles of motivational interviewing geared to stages of change: A pedagogical challenge. *Journal of Teaching Social Work* 27: 21-35.
- Wortham, Stanton (2001) *Narratives in Action*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Zola, Irving K. (1966) Culture and symptoms: An analysis of patient's presenting complaints. *American Sociological Review* 31.5: 615-630.