

THE CONSTRUCTION OF ELDERLY IDENTITY THROUGH TROUBLES-TELLING IN GREEK CONVERSATIONS*

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Περίληψη

Η εργασία αυτή εξετάζει την κατασκευή της ηλικιακής ταυτότητας μέσα από τον καθημερινό λόγο και, συγκεκριμένα, παρουσιάζει τους τρόπους με τους οποίους τα ηλικιωμένα άτομα κατασκευάζουν την ταυτότητά τους στη διάρκεια συνομιλιών στις οποίες κυρίαρχο θέμα είναι κάποιο πρόβλημα που αντιμετωπίζουν. Χρησιμοποιώντας έννοιες από την Εθνομεθοδολογία, την Ανάλυση Συνομιλίας, την Ανάλυση Συνεχούς Λόγου και τη Θεωρία του Κύρους, η μελέτη αυτή επιχειρεί να δείξει ότι τα ηλικιωμένα άτομα δείχνουν ιδιαίτερη προτίμηση σε αυτά τα θέματα επειδή η διαδικασία της αποκάλυψης των δυσκολιών της καθημερινής τους ζωής και των προβλημάτων υγείας ή άλλης φύσης τα οποία αντιμετωπίζουν τους δίνει την ευκαιρία να παρουσιάσουν μια θετική εικόνα του εαυτού τους και να κερδίσουν τη συμπάθεια και τη συμπαράσταση των συνομιλητών/ συνομιλητριών τους.

Λέξεις - κλειδιά:

ageing, advice-giving, conversation analysis, communication accommodation theory, elderly identity, face, membership category, troubles-telling.

1. Introduction: Troubles-Telling and the Elderly

Troubles-telling sequences, that is, conversational sequences in which a speaker's personal problem is the focal point of a conversation, were analyzed by Jefferson in a series of papers (Jefferson 1984a,b 1988; Jefferson and Lee, 1992). They were shown to be organized and interactionally managed by both the troubles-teller and the troubles-recipient, with both sides' exchanges are usually "arrayed as an ordered series of components" (1988: 419). More specifically, participants carefully design and place their turns at talk: the talk moves from an engagement with business as usual to a focusing upon the trouble and then to a re-engagement with business as usual. These interactional moves have to be cooperatively accomplished by both the troubles-teller and the troubles-recipient.

Troubles that are manifested in these sequences "cover an extremely broad area ranging from death, ill health and separation to states of affairs which are contrary to personal expectations and wants" (Bayraktaroglu 1992: 319). Bayraktaroglu presents the following examples of such problematic states of affairs: discomfort, loss/ damage, need/ shortage, all aborted efforts, falling short of socially acclaimed goals, restrictions, obstructions and unexpected difficulties.

We can expect that talk about such troubles will be far more common in contexts involving elderly speakers, since the elderly's range of painful topics tends to be greater than the young's. Coupland, Coupland and Giles, who have dealt extensively with older people's troubles talk or painful self-disclosure—as they prefer to call it—, argue that "experiences of bereavement, certain subcategories of ill health and immobility are probabilistically —though

not at all inevitably – associated with ageing, and loneliness is a predictable consequence of some of the above” (1991: 186). In other words, these authors are certainly far from claiming that painful self-disclosure is purely routine for the old: this is an ageist stereotype in itself. However, “it is certainly the case that the option of editing out negatively valenced personal information will present itself more frequently to the old than to the young” (ibid: 128).

Still, Coupland et al. acknowledge that this type of talk is a “fertile ground for the evocation of ageist stereotypes of the elderly and their communicative styles” (ibid: 116). For example they mention that old people are often cast as grumbling, grim and egocentric interlocutors. On the other hand, it seems that troubles talk as a mode of elderly talk fulfils important goals and needs for some elderly people and functions as an important component of their identity. In examining how this is achieved, this paper will draw on a number of discourse analytic tools and concepts.

First, age identity will not be treated as an intrinsic property of a person. Rather, in line with ethnomethodological claims, it will be seen as an interactional accomplishment negotiated and achieved by people in the course of everyday interaction (Paoletti, 1998: 8) on the basis of the relevant category associated with certain characteristics and features into which they are cast (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998: 3). In our case, membership to the category *old person* entails a series of actions or category-bound activities, as well as rights, responsibilities, expectations and rules that govern ‘age-appropriate’ behaviour. These are cultural resources that are exploited by participants in everyday interaction: thus, that these resources are relevant to the participants and the interaction will become evident in the structure of the interaction itself, i.e. in the structure of the conversation. In this way, we see not simply how members use culture to do things, but how culture is constituted in, and only exists in, action (Hester and Eglin, 1997: 20).

This study will also use concepts from Communication Accommodation Theory, the framework developed by Giles and his colleagues (e.g. Giles et al., 1990) as an attempt to explain how participants modify their speech in relation to the addressees’ speech characteristics.¹ In the context of intergenerational communication, younger speakers are often seen to overaccommodate their speech when addressing older people, which results into patronizing behaviour towards the elderly, as well as “constraining conditions in which the old person has less opportunity to communicate effectively” (Ryan et al., 1986, cited in Okazaki, 1999: 236). On the other hand, older people are found to underaccommodate when addressing younger interlocutors: they are seen as “egocentric, focusing on their own problems and underattentive to the younger [interlocutors’] conversational needs” (Williams and Nussbaum, 2001: 89).

In order to understand the implications of accommodation theory for the elderly troubles-talk, one must also refer to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) conceptualization of *face*. Following Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson have defined face as a property with two dimensions: negative face is the speaker’s need to be free from imposition, and positive face is the speaker’s desire to be appreciated and approved of. Troubles-telling sequences seem to be problematic for the face of both troubles-tellers and troubles-recipients, and so the management of such sequences imposes heavy responsibility upon participants. Elderly troubles-talk can be treated

as underaccommodative behaviour on the part of the elderly since such talk is considered as “norm-violating talk, socially unsophisticated, egocentric and too concerned with the past” (Coupland, et al., 1991: 126). In terms of facework, this kind of talk threatens the old person’s positive face. So why do the elderly talk about their troubles? There seem to be several explanations.

To start with, at the level of conversational engagement, troubles talk can offer the short-term benefit to a troubles-teller’s positive face of having newsworthy information to reveal. At a more personal level, the disclosure of troubles “might be seen to be more profoundly functional for disclosers as intrinsically *therapeutic* (cf. folk beliefs about ‘talking through your troubles’ or ‘getting it off your chest’)” (Coupland et al., 1991: 128). In other words, these disclosures function as “potentially self-cathartic revelations”. The elderly may choose to refer to present and past troubles because they may “be seeking to obviate a variety of negative attributions by the young about the elderly’s capacities, motives and behaviours” (ibid: 129). They may be able to project a heroic identity since they get a chance to set “positive competences and qualities against a backdrop of problems and disadvantage” (ibid), which helps them transform the negativity associated with troubles-telling into some positive quality that should be appreciated by their interlocutors.

2. Instances of Troubles-Telling

We will now turn to data from authentic Greek conversations to examine instances of troubles-telling sequences in both intergenerational and peer-elderly contexts.ⁱⁱ

2.1 Troubles-Telling in Intergenerational and Peer-Elderly Contexts

The first fragment comes from a first-encounter conversation. Coupland, et al. (1991) have found out that there is indeed some regular expectation on the elderly’s part that troubles-telling is available to them as a resource to first encounters. In this fragment, (Α)ρχόντω, who is 73 years old, is talking to (Γ)εωργία, who is 67, and (Φ)ένια, who is 23, about her aching leg.

Fragment 1 (2A295)

- 1 (f) **A:** Με έφαγε το ποδά:ρι μου (.) αυτό.
 2 (0.5)
 3 (f) **Γ:** Είναι οι () [τώρα
 4 **A:** [Έχω τα σίδερα μέσα.
 5 (f) **Φ:** Ε το ‘σπασε π- πρόπερσι ήταν που το ‘σπασες ή πέρσι; (.) πρόπερσι.
 6 (.)
 7 **A:** Ποιο;
 8 **Φ:** Που το ‘χες σπάσει;
 9 **A:** Ναι έχω τώρα έχω τρι:α χρό: [ναι τι
 10 **Φ:** [Να είδες;=
 11 **A:** =Τρία χρόνια, και δεν περνά:ει και τώρα φοβά:μαι (.) μουδιάζει::: (.)
 δεν μπορώ::: (.) άρρωστο πια το ολοένα::: .hhh κά[τι κρίσεις με
 πιάνου[νε
 12 **Γ:** [Κι εγώ φέτος [Δύσκολο
 χειμώνα έβγαλα κι εγώ φ[έτος

- 13 A: [Δύσκολο χειμώνα (...)] Δεν (θέλω πια) να ζήσω:
.hhh Μα την αλήθεια σε λέω=
- 14 Φ: =Μια χαρά (είσαι) () δόξα το Θεό να λέμε.
15 (.)
- 16 A: °E°
17 (0.5)
- 18 Φ: Τα βάσανα και τα προβλήματα δεν τελειώνουν για κανέναν κυρία
Αρχόντω.
- 19 A: Το κεφάλι μου κοιτάξε το κεφάλι μου το 'χωσα μέσα (.) τώρα δυο
μπάνια που 'κανα (.) μέσα ντιπ το[κεφάλι ()
- 20 Φ: [Καλά κάνεις
21 A: Το κεφάλι μου γιατί έχω στο κεφάλι μου τα- με χτύπησαν τα: νεύρα
στο κεφάλι τι είν' αυτό το πράγμα
22 (.)
- 23 A: Τι είν' αυτό. Με πιάνουν από μια ώρα δυο- Μετά άρχισα με την
καρδιά: μου (.) έχω αρρυθμία:α, έχω:: αρρυθμία.
- 24 Γ: Κι εγώ έχω με την καρδιά. Στηθάγχη
25 A: [Με κάθισαν τρεις φορές στο
26 () [ήταν το παιδί μου
27 Γ: [Στηθάγχη έχω κι εγώ
28 A: Εεε ήταν το παιδί μου μονά:χα (.) .hh πως με πιάνει την πρώτη φορά
τόσο δυνατά που μ' έπιασε που μου 'φευγε το () από μόνο του
δεν βασιλιόταν πουθενά.
- 29 Γ: Δεν βάζεις αυτοκόλλητο;
30 (.)
- 31 Γ: ()
- 32 A: Α, τίποτα δεν μου βάλανε.
- 33 Γ: Εγώ βάζω αυτοκόλλητο
- 34 A: Τίποτα δεν μου 'δωκαν εμένα μου 'δωκαν τα χα- μονάχα τα χαπάκια
να πίνω τρι:α ογδοντά:ρια
35 (.)
- 36 A: Των ογδό:ντα:: μιλιγκρά::μ .hhh να πίνω τρία τέταρτα την ημέρα
37 () ()
- 38 Γ: Εγώ επειδή ήμουν με::: πονοκέ:φαλο και με δώσαν αυτοκόλλητο ()
() το βάζεις το πρωί και το βράδυ που θα κοιμηθείς το βγάζεις
- 39 A: Είναι καλό; Είναι καλά αυτά:;
40 Γ: Ε, καλά είναι, άμα έχεις την αρρυθμία της καρδιά:ς

The younger participant, Φένια, is an active and sympathetic troubles-recipient. She produces a topicalizer (Button and Casey, 1984) (turn 5) that helps Αρχόντω develop her troublesome topic, and goes on to offer affiliative responses (turns 10, 20) thus showing that she sympathizes with Αρχόντω's problems, which she also tries to downplay (14) and recast as the normal human condition (18). One should also note the behaviour of the second elderly participant, Γεωργία, who tries to talk about her similar problems, but all of her three attempts to produce troubles-talk fail (12, 24), as Αρχόντω is holding the floor and does not allow anybody else to assume the role of the troubles-teller. Αρχόντω even incorporates the actual words Γεωργία has introduced (*δύσκολο χειμώνα*) (12) to go on presenting her own troubles (13). Γεωργία is finally able to talk about the measures she has taken to solve her problem and some kind of balance is finally achieved.

The second fragment comes from a telephone conversation between (A)ννα, who is in her late 70s, and her middle-aged niece (N)ίκη, who is in her early 50s.

Fragment 2 (25/12/02:B107)

- 1 (f) **A:** Τώρα φυσικά επειδή εμείς γεράσαμε (.) όλους που ακούω όλοι δεν
μπορούν (.) όλοι κα- κάθε μέρα ένα καινούριο βγαίνει.
- 2 (f) **N:** Όλοι θεί:α έχουν προβλή:ματα [(αυτό:.) ό:λοι οι=
3 **A:** [Ό:λοι να-
4 **N:** =άνθρωποι
5 (.)
6 **A:** Σήμερα να:- όχι οι άνθρωποι καλά: αλλά εμείς είμαστε λόγω ηλικί:ας
[.h(.) απ' ό:λα πολλά: μαζί έχουμε χε [χε
9 **N:** [Ναι [Ε πολλά: μαζί αλλά να είναι τα
ρευματικά τα τέτοια [αυτά δεν πειράζει αυτά υποφέρονται οι πό:νοι
έχει=
10 **A:** [Ναι
11 **N:** =πασ[σίπινα,
12 **A:** [°Τι να κάνουμε°
13 (.)
14 **N:** Έχει τέ:τοια,
15 (.)
16 **A:** Και: ε: λόγω του ότι: δεν μπορού:με και: απομονωθήκαμε (.) και πού
θα πά:με τώ:ρα κι η δικιά: μας μεγά:λη ηλικί:α ό:λοι δεν μπορού:ν.
17 (.)
18 **N:** .hhh Κοίταξε κι η δικιά σας μεγά:λη ηλικί:α μόνο μέρα μπορεί να βγει
και σε μια καφετερί:α γιατί: δεν μπορεί να πάει;
19 (.)
20 **A:** Με ποιον θα πάμε στην κα[φετ-
21 **N:** [Ο:χι (.) εννοείται με μια φιλενάδα σου [που ()
22 **A:** [Ε τώ:ρα
να κι εμείς () πηγαίναμε (να) κάθε Κυριακή σε σε- απέναντι σε
μια: καφετερί:α [.hhh
23 **N:** [Ε ναι αυτό: (να [κάνετε)
24 **A:** [Ε από πότε ήρθα απ' την Φούρκα δεν
πήγαμε καθόλου.
25 (.)
26 **N:** Ναι γιατί το πρωί μετά την εκκλησί:α όταν δεν βρέχει όταν δεν κά:νει=
27 **A:** =Γιατί γιατί [δεν:: αυτές που είχα εγώ δεν έχει εδώ: () με: ο- με=
28 **N:** [Κι εσείς ψυχή έχετε
29 **A:** =πολλές να κάνεις παρέα .hh[h
30 **N:** [Ναι
31 **A:** () η Ευθυμία έγινε κι αυτή ογδόντα δύο χρονών .hh έπρεσε έκανε
δεν μπορεί (...) να βγει να πούμε απ' τη Χαριλάου να ρθει εδώ όπως
ερχόταν
32 **N:** Ε ναι αλλιώς είναι να είναι στη γειτονιά σου κι αλλιώς να εί[ναι τόσο=
33 **A:** [Γιατί και=
34 **N:** =[μακριά
35 **A:** =[τους εξυπηρετεί και έτσι χά:λασε κι αυ[τή
36 **N:** [Ε κι η αδελφή της, χά:λασε αλλά
καμιά απ' τη γειτονιά: σου εκεί απ' την εκκλησί:α που πάτε=
37 **E:** =Ε δεν: ε εμείς εδώ δεν έχει τέτοια (...) δεν έχει, οι καφετέριες εδώ είναι
γεμά:τες νεολαί:α.

- 38 N: N:αι
 39 A: Πού θα μπεις εσύ μέσα με () με:: τσιγά:ρα με::
 40 N: Θεία δεν εννοώ αυτό γιατί κι εμείς εδώ πάμε εκεί που πάει η νεολαία;
 πάμε σε μία ά::λλη καφετερί:α=
 41 A: =Δεν έχει τώρα τέτοια εδώ [πέρα
 42 N: [Και μας βλέπουν και μεγά:λους κι [εμάς δεν=
 43 A: [E (καλά)=
 44 N: =[μπορούμε
 45 A: =[E::σεί:ς δεν: είστε μεγά:λες()
 46 N: Εμ εσεί:ς εμ- για σα:ς είμαστε μικροί: για τα παιδιά: μας και για τα πιο
 μικρά απ' τα παιδιά: μας τα δεκαεφτά:: είμαστε πολú:: μας βλέπουνε χε
 χε χε χε

The elderly aunt (A) presents a series of factors that restrict her to her house. The troubles-telling sequence begins with the aunt presenting her health problems. The niece (N) responds with a generalization (“all people have similar problems”) (turn 2), but this is not treated as a preferred response by the aunt. Obviously, a sympathetic response that would indicate the middle-aged woman’s affiliation to her aunt’s problem would seem more appropriate (cf. Jefferson, 1988: 428). The niece tries to refute the aunt’s arguments by proposing alternatives. When the aunt complains about health problems, the niece says that the ailments her aunt suffers from (and of which she is already informed) are not too serious and can be solved by taking medicine (9, 11, 14). The aunt moves on to complain about being confined to the house (16) but the niece suggests she could go to a cafe (18). The aunt will now complain about not having friends to accompany her there (20, 21, 24, 31, 33, 37) and she comments on the fact that there are not many cafes elderly women could go to (37, 39). In other words, the niece’s suggestions are actively resisted by the elderly aunt because, as it will be shown in section 2.3 below, advice as a response to troubles-talk is normally rejected.

The aunt’s behaviour could be characterized as underaccommodative (Coupland, Coupland and Giles, 1991: 47): she is not willing to accept any of the alternatives proposed by the younger interlocutor and she insists on preserving all those negative features that actually threaten her identity (isolation, immobility, inactivity). Still, we cannot overlook the fact that her unwillingness to accept her niece’s suggestions reflects the cultural norms and expectations about old people, in other words, the ageist images of old people that society has forced her to adopt. On the other hand, the nieces’ efforts to get her elderly aunt to renegotiate her prescribed identity have to be emphasized. She does not approve of the restricted role her aunt seems to have accepted and actively tries to reconstruct the negative stereotypical image by resisting the aunt’s troubles-telling.

This kind of resistance can also be found in peer-elderly contexts. In the following fragment (3), (P)ούλα, who is 65, has just met (M)ερόπη, who is 76.

Fragment 3 (4A041)

- 1 (f) P: Το καλοκαίρι έχει η νύφη μου εδώ (.) το μαγαζί που είν’ το εστιατό:ριο
 Μουριέ:ς (...) είναι του αδελφού μου .hh και πέθαναν και τα δυο: τα
 αδέλφια μου. [.hhh Και τα ‘χει νοικιασμένα η νύφη μου.
 2 (f) M: [A:χ
 3 (0.3)

4 P: Τι να κάνουμε; τα άφησαν τα καλά; και (.) κι έφυγαν.
5 (0.2)
6 P: Ο ένας ανύπαντρος κι ένας παντρεμέ:[νος
7 M: [Αυτά είναι τυχερά πράματα
8 (0.5)
90 P: Κυρία μου (όχι) δεν σε λέω τον πόνο μου που (δουλεύω) (.) .h αλλά
λέω περνάω; (.) και κλαίει η καρδιά μου=λέω (.) δεν (είναι) ζει ένας
αδελφός μου, (.) κι εμέ:να να είναι να τα βλέπω απ' έξω () να δει τα
κορίτσια του, (.) να δει τα εγγόνια του,
10 (.)
11 P: Ααχ
12 M: Κανείς δεν είναι χωρίς παρά:πονο κυρία μου.
13 (0.5)
14 M: Κανείς;
15 P: ([)
16 M: [Ο:λοι είναι με παρά:πονα.
17 (.)
18 P: Με παράπονα
19 (.)
20 M: Ό:λοι
21 P: Έχετε παιδά:κια;
22 (1.0)
23 M: Κι εγώ: αυτό είν' το παράπονό μου που δεν έχω.
24 (0.7)
25 P: (Δεν έχετε)
26 (1.5)
27 M: Έχω βαφτιστή:ρια έχω δεκαπέντε βαφτιστήρια με τον άντρα μου.
28 P: Να σε ζη:σουν (.) να ζη:σουν. Να σε πω κυρία μου. .h Μερικά παιδιά:
(.) βγαίνουν καλά: (...) Κι εκείνοι που έχουνε παιδιά κυρία μου
παραπονούνται κι εκείνοι που δεν έχουνε,
29 (.)
30 M: Ε:: κοιτάχτε να δείτε (.) .hh λένε ότι αυτοί που δεν έχουν παιδιά έχουν
έναν καημό κι αυτοί που έχουν, έχουν δύ:ο ()=
31 P: =Τι λε:ς μωρέ: (.) άμα είχα το παιδί μου δεν θα 'μαν καλά: τι λες μω[ρέ:
32 M: [Α ()
) κι εγώ άμα είχα ένα παιδά:κι, δεν θα 'μουν έτσι.

Ρούλα talks to Μερόπη about her late brother's shop and this gives her a chance to talk about the loss of both her brothers (1, 4, 6). Μερόπη remains silent for a while (3, 5) before replying to Ρούλα with a phrase that does not express any sympathy (7). When Ρούλα insists on talking about her feelings (8), Μερόπη again answers in a tone that seems to be dismissive (12). Ρούλα, though, will give Μερόπη a chance to engage herself in troubles-talk. They are both childless and express their regret. Note that once again this is a fragment from a first-encounter conversation (cf. fragment 1) in which there seems to be an expectation on the elderly interlocutors' part to reveal intimate painful information.

In the fourth fragment, (Φ)ένια, who is 23, is having a conversation with 67-year-old (Ε)ιρήνη whom she has not seen for several months. Another participant, 70-year-old (Κ)ούλα, is also present.

Fragment 4 (1B005)

- 1 (f) **E:** Φέτος δεν πέρασα καλά.
 2 (f) **Φ:** Γιατί κυρία Ειρήνη μου;
 3 (.)
 4 **E:** Είχα προβλήματα.
 5 **Φ:** Αρρώστιες;
 6 (0.3)
 7 **E:** Όχι αρρώστιες, οικονομικά προβλήματα.
 8 (.)
 9 **Φ:** Όλος ο κόσμος, Ο:ΛΟΣ heh ο κό:σμος [heh
 10 **E:** [Είχα πολλά οικονομικά
 προβλήματα, ξέ:ρεις, μετά το θάνατο του άντρα μου, έχω πολύ:: (0.5) (
) έ:χω χαμηλώσει. (.) Πολύ.
 11 (0.5)
 12 **E:** Γιατί::
 13 (0.5)
 14 **Φ:** Κουράγιο (κυρία Ειρήνη μου).
 15 (.)
 16 **E:** Για την καρδιά: μου, γι' αυτό:.
 17 (0.5)
 18 **Φ:** Γιατί έχω αναλάβει να πληρώ:νω τα έ:νοσημα της αδελφής μου που είναι
στη Χιλή:.
 19 (.)
 20 **Φ:** Ε, κάνει τέτοιες θυσίες τι να [κάνουμε
 21 **E:** [Ναι και είναι:: 40 χιλιά:δες αυτά. Μέσα είν' η
 μάνα σου; (...)

Following Ειρήνη's statement that she's had a tough year so far (1) Φένια investigates the possible reasons (2, 5). Ειρήνη blames her financial problems during the previous months (7). Φένια's reponse again stresses the normalcy of such a trouble: everyone has to cope with financial problems nowadays (9). This response could have terminated Ειρήνη's troubles-telling; instead, she goes on to give details of her problem (10) despite the fact that Φένια's responses as talk (14) or silence (13, 14, 15, 17) do not encourage her to do so. In the end, however, Φένια will eventually display her sympathy and praise Ειρήνη for her sacrifice. Of significance here is the fact that the third participant who is listening to this exchange has never met Ειρήνη before. So practically Ειρήνη's self-disclosure is made again in the context of a first encounter.

2.2 Collaborative Troubles-Telling

In this section, we will deal with the way the elderly can construct their identities as members of the same age group through collaborative troubles-talk. Fragment (5) is a continuation of fragment (4) above. After Ειρήνη and Κούλα have been introduced, they start talking about the prices of melons.

Fragment 5 (1B005)

- 22 (f) **K:** Πολύ φτηνά κι ωραία τα πεπόνια
 23 (f) **E:** Εμ εκατό δραχμές το κιλό τι πληρώνεις; () Εδώ ένα ψωμί κι ένα::
 κιλό πεπόνι να πά:ρεις, την περνάς τη μέρα σου, έτσι δεν είναι;
 24 (0.2)
 25 **E:** Εμείς οι μεγά:λοι.

- 26 (0.3)
 26 **K:** Ε:: δεν κάνει να:: τρωσ και πολλά φαγιά γιατί:: να μην παχύνουμε, τα πόδια δεν το πάνε:: άμα είμαστε πολύ:: (.) βαριές (.) που λένε.
 27 **E:** Μάλιστα
 28 (.)
 29 **K:** Έτσι το βλέπω εγώ.
 30 (3.0)
 31 **K:** Αλλά: είναι: ακρίβεια όπου να πας ό,τι να κάνεις (.) τα λεφτά φεύγουνε πολύ γρήγορα.
 32 (0.5)
 33 **E:** Δεν υπάρχουνε γι' αυτό φεύγουνε.
 34 (0.3)
 35 **E:** Γιατί δεν έχουμε μαγιά: ό,τι παίρνουμε αυτά: είναι heh heh heh
 36 (.)
 37 **E:** Μια φορά κι έναν καιρό βάζαμε και στην τράπεζα κά:τι. (.) Τώ:ρα:: δεν περισσεύουνε
 38 **K:** Τώρα:: είναι ακρίβει- [ακριβή ακριβή η ζωή κυρί:α μου.
 39 **E:** [να βάλουμε
 40 **E:** Και μπορούσαμε να πάρουμε κάτι με το περίσσευμα.
 41 (0.5)
 42 **K:** Τι να γίνει,
 43 **E:** Θα περάσει ο καιρός

In this peer-elderly context, the two women talk about high prices. Collaborative troubles-telling can emphasize in-group solidarity and a sense of community –Faircloth's (2001) work is relevant at this point. The two women have a chance to talk about past money resources and compare them to the pensions they get now. Ageing and the experiences associated with it are thus shared and the elderly interlocutors align with each other's talk along a dimension of group-identity.

One more instance of collaborative troubles-talk is shown in the sixth fragment. (Γ)ιώργος, 75, and (Α)σπασία, 80, are instructing a young participant, who remains silent, about TV programmes.

Fragment 6 (4/1/02/B600)

- 1 (m) **Γ:** Βάζουν τις συνεντεύξεις αυτές, (.) τις βάζουν αργά στις δώδεκα παρά τέταρτο. Τρία σίριαλ- Βάλε δύο σίριαλ και βάλ' τα εκείνα πιο νωρί:ς.
 2 (.)
 3 **Γ:** Όπως κι η επιθεώρηση τώρα, (.) στις δώδεκα παρά τέταρτο. .hh Εδώ ή:: η νυχτερινή παράσταση τελειώνει τόσο αργά: .hh εμείς θα κάτσουμε στην τηλεόραση να δούμε το-
 4 (.)
 5 (f) **A:** Μετά: απ' την επιθεώ:ρηση: να βάλουν έργο όποιος θέλει. (.) Εμεί:ς οι καημέ:νες .hh περιμένουμε περιμένουμε [νυστάζουμε
 6 **Γ:** [Ενώ πρώτα τρεις σταθμοί ήταν οι κρατικοί .hh δύο στην Αθήνα κι ένας ΕΤ3 στη Θεσσαλονί:κη .hh είχε κά:θε φορά:, .hh κάθε μέρα μια ώρα με τραγούδια. (.) Έξω από πάγκα κάτι τραγουδίστριες, αυτό (.) .hh ε, θέλεις και μουσική ν' ακούς.
 7 (.)
 8 **Γ:** Εδώ τώρα τρι:α σίριαλ.=ΣΤΑΣΟΥ βρε παιδί μου,

Notice how both edlerly speakers are doing inclusion by using the pronoun *εμείς* (turns 3, 5); the female speaker even uses *εμείς οι καημένες*, which makes the groups she refers to even more specific (old women who cannot stay up late at night). Once again, the sense of belonging to a specific category is established by cooperative troubles-telling.

2.3 Troubles-Telling vs Advice-Giving

As was mentioned above, an interesting feature of troubles-telling sequences is that they can turn into advice-giving sequences when the troubles-recipient proposes solutions to the troubles presented (Jefferson and Lee, 1992; Bayraktaroglu, 2002). The last fragment, one among many of its kind in my data, will show how elderly speakers resist the advice offered, as talking about their problems seems more important than finding solutions to them. (Γ)εωργία and (Ε)λένη, both in their late 60s, are talking about housework.

Fragment 7 5B600

- 1 (f) Γ: Να πας κάπου να μη μαγειρεύεις και να μην πλένεις πιάτα.
 2 (.)
 3 (f) Ε: Ναι
 4 Γ: Που είναι αυτό το μέρος;
 5 Ε: Δύο τρεις φορές: (.) την ημέρα (.) ώσπου να μαγειρέψεις.
 6 Γ: Το μεσημέρι μαγειρεύω το βράδυ φαΐ δεν έχουμε.
 7 (0.5)
 8 Ε: Είστε πολλοί [(κυρία)]=
 9 Γ: [Εφτά
 10 Γ: =Εφτά (άτομα) είμαστε.
 11 Ε: Έξι είν' η κόρη μου που κάθεται με την πεθερά της.
 12 Γ: °Ο γαμπρός μου είναι εγχειρισμένος πάντα θέλει ιδιαίτερο φαΐ (.) ένα ψάρι
 ένα μπιφτέκι θα μπει στον φούρνο το ταψί καίγεται. () Να τα χέρια
 μου είναι μαυρισμένα όλο από τα πιάτα°
 13 (0.3)
 14 Ε: Μόνο ιδιαίτερα για τον γαμπρό [σου
 15 Γ: [Ε τι είναι:: εγχειρισμένος ο άνθρω[πος
 16 Ε: [Κοίτα ξέρω
 ξέρω ξέρεις τι θα κάνεις;
 17 (.)
 18 Ε: .hh Εγώ πήρα ένα μικρό φουρνάκι::: (.) και βάζω στο ταψάκι με:: (.) ένα
 χαρτί στο σούπερ μάρκετ τα πουλάνε::, (.) που δεν κολλάει τίποτα από κάτω.
 19 Γ: .hhh Αχ
 20 Ε: Ούτε καίγεται.
 21 (.)
 22 Ε: Κανονίζεις μέσα βάζεις το λά:δι, (.) βάζεις και το ψαράκι σου, βάζεις κι ό,τι
 θέλεις μέσα, (.) ψήσ' το στο φούρνο.
 23 (.)

Γεωργία's complaints about having to cook so much food every day is received sympathetically by Ελένη. However, when Ελένη tells Γεωργία what she should do to reduce her washing-up load (16), Γεωργία does not seem to accept this advice —notice her gaps in turns 17, 21, 23 and her sigh in turn 19.

3. Concluding Remarks

To sum up, this paper has presented instances of how the elderly interactively manage troubles-telling sequences as well as the implications of such sequences for the construction of elderly identities. We saw that troubles-talk is valued by elderly troubles-tellers as an important tool for their interactional goals in intergenerational as well as peer-elderly contexts. Troubles-tellers use this kind of talk to promote positive aspects of their elderly identity, an identity which seems to be shadowed by social expectations/ norms as well as various health problems. In this way, the face-promoting aspects of troubles-telling outweigh the more obvious face-threatening aspects of this process, and the therapeutic function of troubles-talk renders such talk an important self-reinforcing component of elderly identity. Troubles recipients, on the other hand, can either affiliate with this kind of talk or resist it through a variety of moves. In any case, troubles-telling and, hence, the identity of elderly troubles-tellers is a collaborative achievement that is carefully structured by conversationalists.

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Σημειώσεις

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ⁱ Conversation analysts have also acknowledged the significance of *recipient design*, i.e. the fact that participants construct or design their talk in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to coparticipants (Sacks et al., 1978).

ⁱⁱ The notation utilized in the transcripts is based on Ten Have (1999: 213-214).

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