Some effects of democratization on the performance of face-threatening acts in expert-layman communication

Svenja Kranich (University of Bonn) &
Wera Neuhäuser (University of Mainz)

Democratization and expert-layman communication

Democratization:

➤ Changes in society that lead to more equal rights of all members of society, including equal rights of communicating opinions.

Effects on communication:

➤ Hierarchies that still exist are not focused on, but are rather 'hidden from view' by communicative strategies

➤ For expert-layman communication this means that the experts will employ more hedges and softeners and create more symmetric relationships to the laymen.

➤ Extreme effects: Scepticism of all experts; notion that everyone's opinion is of the same value.

Structure

1. Short overview of previous research on democratization and changes in communicative style

2. Changes in written expert-layman communication: Diachronic corpus studies of popular scientific articles (1978-1982 vs. 1999-2002)

3. Changes in spoken expert-layman communication in a casting show (2005 vs. today)

4. Conclusions and outlook

Previous research on democratization and communicative style (1)

* Decline of modals expressing hierarchical relations of power (*shall, must*) (Myhill 1995, Mair 2006, Collins 2009).

* Overall decline of deontic modality (Jäger forthc.)

* Identification & elimination of sexist features of language, e.g. decline of generic *he.*

Previous research on democratization and communicative style (2)

* Kranich & Schramm (2015) find young present-day German speakers to be more indirect when performing requests than they were in earlier studies (e.g. House 1996), also in situations where speaker has power over addressee.

Structure

1. Short overview of previous research on democratization and changes in communicative style

2. Changes in written expert-layman communication: Diachronic corpus studies of popular scientific articles (1978-1982 vs. 1999-2002)

3. Changes in spoken expert-layman communication in a casting show (2005 vs. today)

4. Conclusions and outlook

Characteristics of popular scientific discourse

* Author-in-the-text has the role of knowledge provider; reader-in-the-text the role of knowledge acquirer.

* Integration of new knowledge into existent world view is potentially face-threatening (cf. Wilke 1986).

* Linguistic strategies such as hedging facilitate acceptance of new ideas (Crismore & Vande Kopple 1997).

The Popular Science Corpus

	1978-1982	1999-2002
English source texts	26 texts	38 texts
Their German translations	26 texts	38 texts
Non-translated German texts	19 texts	32 texts

Table 1: Structure of the popular science corpus

Total word count: 500,000

(Project *Covert Translation*. University of Hamburg, SFB 538, 1999-2011):

Research on the Popular Science Corpus

* Studies have focused on use of linguistic items that are associated with expression of subjectivity and author-reader interaction in written discourse:

1. Speaker-deictic personal pronouns: *we–wir* (Baumgarten 2008)

2. Sentence-initial conjunctions: additive (*And–Und*) and concessive (*But–Aber–Doch*)
(Baumgarten 2007, Becher, House & Kranich 2009)

3. Epistemic modal markers: modal verbs (e.g. *may*), modal adverbs (e.g. *perhaps*) (Kranich 2009, 2011, 2016)

   (cf. also Kranich, House & Becher 2012)

Functions of sentence-initial conjunctions

* In sentence-initial position, they can be used to simulate direct interaction (cf. Becher et al. 2009)
* e.g. in question-response patterns

(1)   **But** what caused these calamities in the first place…?

* often in conjunction with other elements reminiscent of spoken discourse.

(2) Das Landesdenkmalamt hofft, solchem Vandalismus durch Aufklärung vorbeugen zu können. **Und** durch ein bisschen Geheimniskrämerei.
'The heritage department hopes to prevent such vandalism through education. And through a little bit of secretiveness.'

(Examples taken from Becher et al. (2009: 139) and Baumgarten (2007: 164) respectively)

Functions of epistemic modal markers

* Speakers/writers using epistemic modal markers "express[…] their lack of confidence in the propositions expressed in [their] utterances." (Coates 1995: 59)

* Motivations to use them:

1. Content-based caution: Speaker isn't sure whether the proposition p is true. e.g. *Paul **may** be at home right now.*

2. Addressee-based caution: the speaker is sure that p is true, but does not want to shock/insult hearer by stating bluntly "p is true", assuming perhaps that hearer believed p not to be true. e.g. *You **may** have a problem with alcohol.* (cf. Hyland 1996)

Addressee-oriented use of epistemic modal markers

* This interpersonal use of epistemic modality motivated by a wish to be more polite, state matters less directly and leave more room for non-face-threatening intervention (such as disagreement) on the part of the addressee. A more "dialogic" text (White & Sano 2006).

(3) "Alter Muskel rostet nicht" **mag** also der Slogan lauten.

"Old muscle does not rust" could be the punchline.

Hypothesis

* Increasing democratization will lead to more and more symmetric simulated author-reader relationship.
* As a consequence, markers creating more personal and interactional discourse that leaves more room for reader's own opinion should increase over time.

Methods

* Corpus searches using paraconc (for *and-und*, *but-aber*, personal pronouns)
* Manual analyses of 'mini-corpus' consisting of the text beginnings and text endings of texts in the corpus, all in all 3840 sentences (for the search of all epistemic modal markers)

Changes in English original popular science texts

	1978-1982	1999-2002	Increase
First person pronoun *we*	13.2	31.0	**+134.9%**
Sentence-initial *But*	22.7	30.1	**+32.6%**
Sentence-initial *And*	2.3	6.3	**+173.9%**
Epistemic modal markers	150	200	**+33.3%**

Frequencies normalized per 10,000 words for *And* and *we*; per 1,000 sentences for *But* and epistemic modal expressions.

Changes in German original popular science texts

	1978-1982	1999-2002	Increase
First person pronoun *wir*	17.7	36.3	**+105%**
Sentence-initial *Aber/Doch*	9.0	19.8	**+120%**
Sentence-initial *Und*	0.9	4.5	**+400%**
Epistemic modal markers	181.3	271.9	**+50%**

Frequencies normalized per 10,000 words for *Und* and *wir*; per 1,000 sentences for *Aber/Doch* and epistemic modal expressions.

Summary of findings on popular science writing

* Increase of all the linguistic markers creating more personal, more interactional and – in the case of epistemic markers – more indirect texts.

* As a result, the clear-cut contrasts existing between the English and German texts in 1978-1982 no longer hold true in the 1999-2002 texts.

* In both linguacultures, the simulated author-reader relationship becomes more symmetric. ✔

* Democratization hypothesis

Structure

1. Short overview of previous research on democratization and changes in communicative style

2. Changes in written expert-layman communication: Diachronic corpus studies of popular scientific articles (1978-1982 vs. 1999-2002)

3. Changes in spoken expert-layman communication in a casting show (2005 vs. today)

4. Conclusions and outlook

Impoliteness in American Idol

* Following Culpeper's (2011) definition of impoliteness
   * Situated behaviors experienced as impolite
     →when conflicting with expectations → cause offense, threaten face
* Spencer-Oatey's (2002; 2008) rapport management framework:
   * Closely related to sense of identity/ self-concept
   * Concerns about the self (individual vs. group member / in relation to others)
     →**quality face**

Subcategories of quality face

* Participants in talent show claim to own "professional *Idol* qualities", i.e. musical talent, song choice, performance, attitude/character, looks.
* Examples:
* Attitude/character
  (4) "Well Albert, yes you have personality, but dogs have personality."
  (Idol Corpus S4 E6 (14))

* Looks
  (5) "I think there's something to be said to you as a group, you're all overweight […] You all look like three overweight Jessica Simpsons" (Idol Corpus S4 E2 (7))

American Idol Corpus

* Season 4 (2005) – 9 episodes
* Season 9 (2010) – 4 episodes
* Season 12 (2013) – 9 episodes
* Season 15 (2016) – 4 episodes

Total (Conversations with impoliteness)
= 100

# Influence of democratization on impoliteness usage

Hypotheses:

1. Diachronic investigation of the genre will reveal a position of transition, which should manifest as a trend of decreasing frequency of performed impoliteness in general

2. Shift in focus of FTAs' targets: aiming more frequently at musical talent and less frequently at other quality face categories like looks.

Diachronic development of impoliteness occurrences
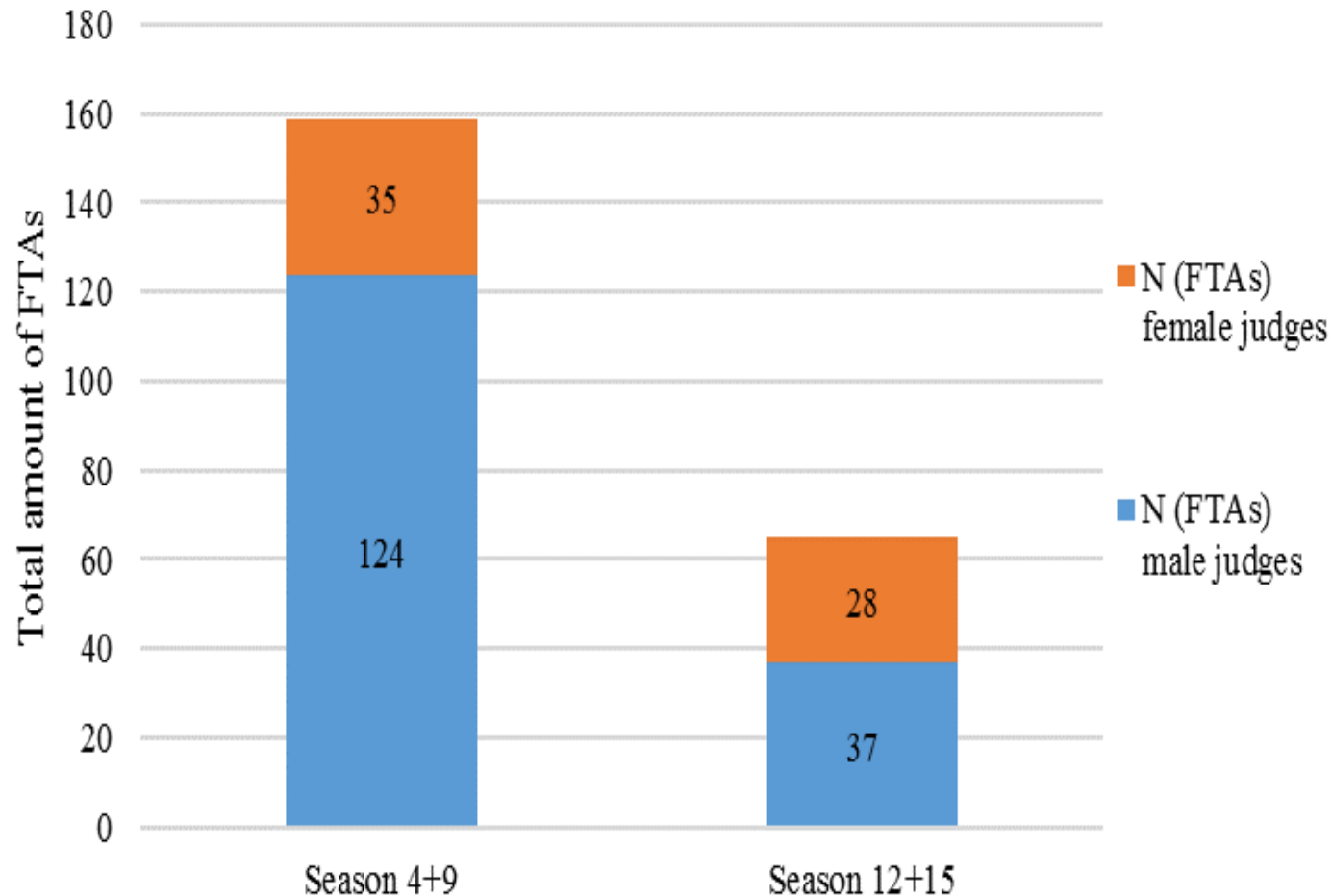
Diachronic development of impoliteness occurrences
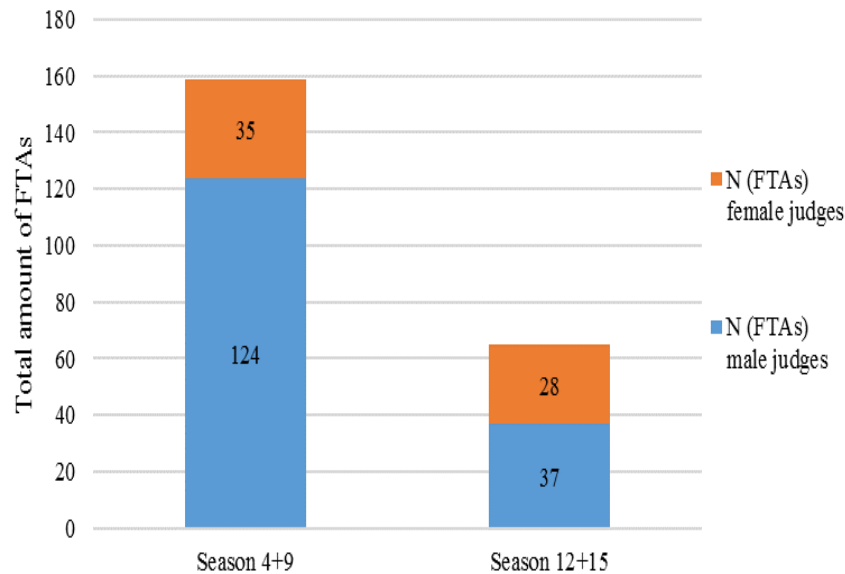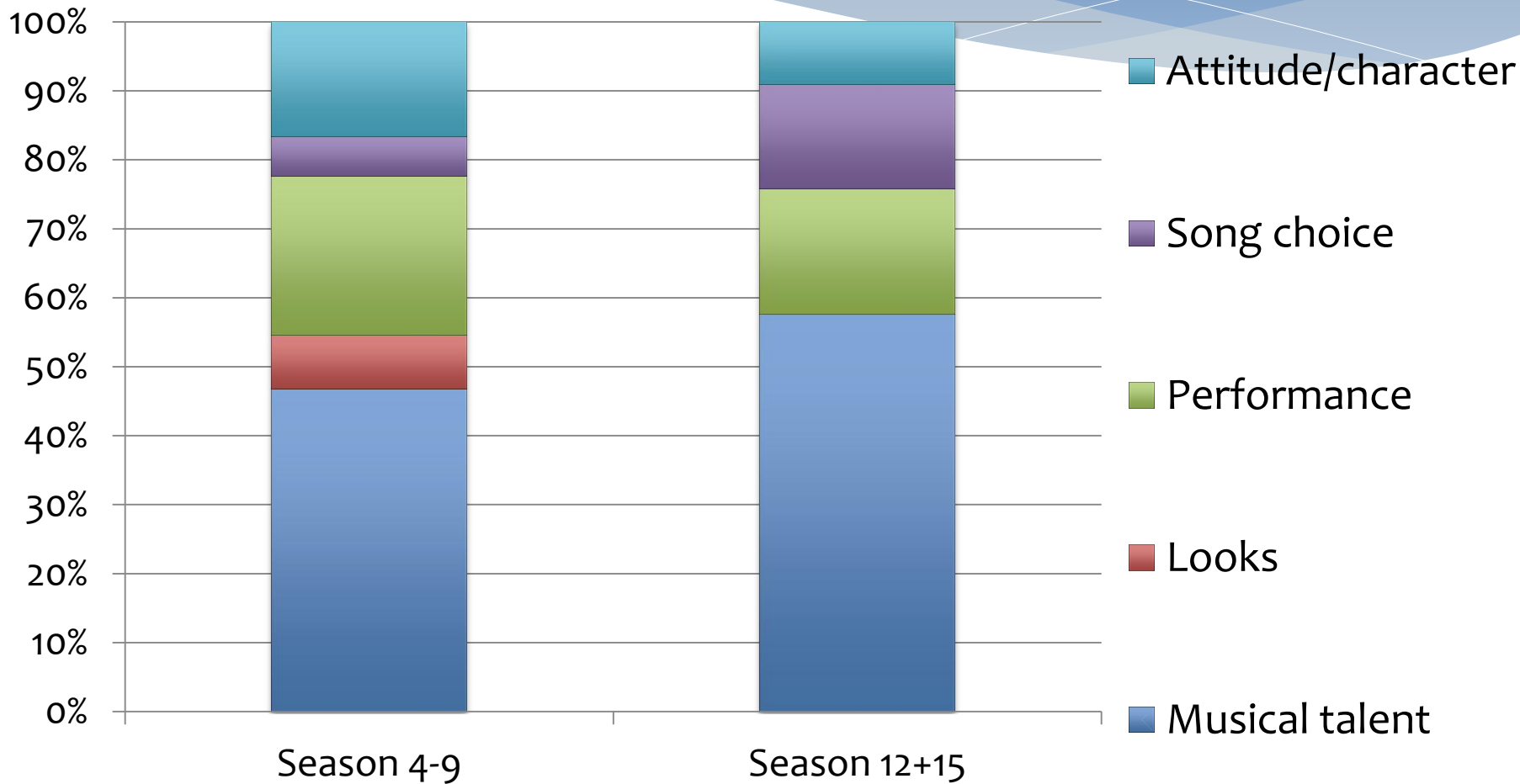

Hypothesis 1

trend of decreasing frequency of performed impoliteness in general
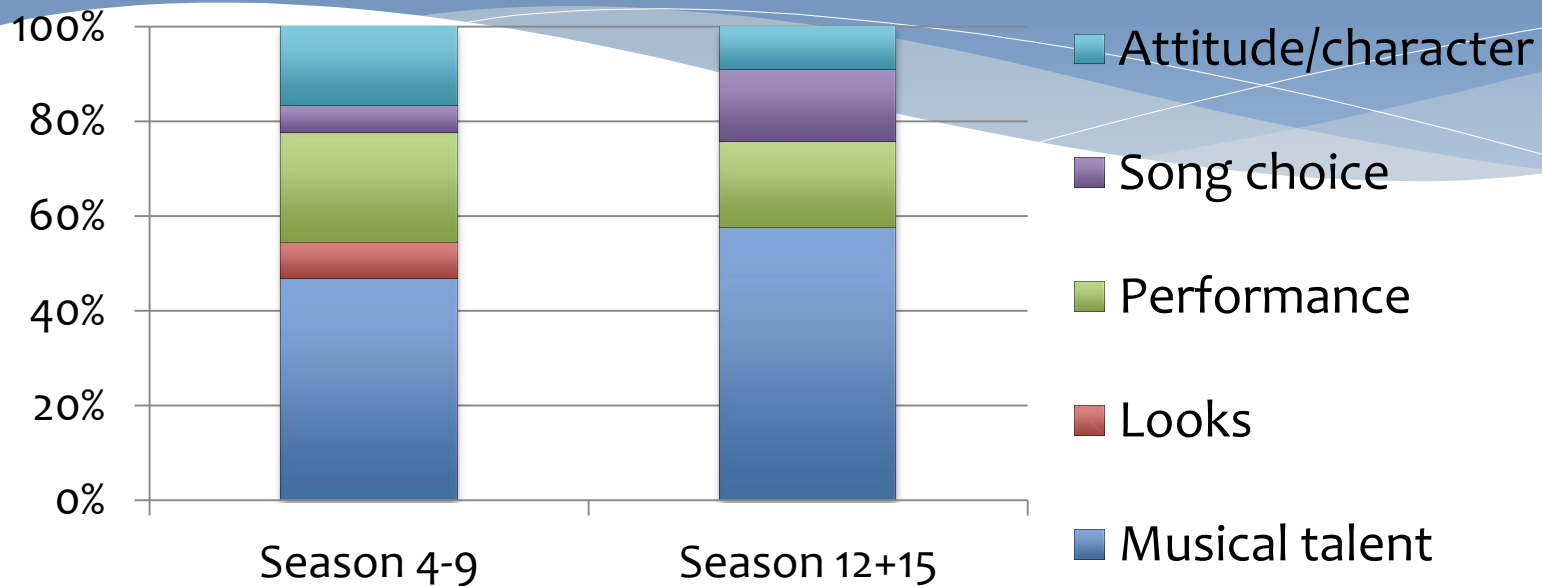→ transition in genre's impoliteness usage

Distribution of targeted quality face categories

Distribution of targeted quality face categories

Hypothesis 2
Shift in focus of FTAs' targets: aiming more frequently at musical talent and less frequently at other quality face categories like looks.

Structure

1. Short overview of previous research on democratization and changes in communicative style

2. Changes in written expert-layman communication: Diachronic corpus studies of popular scientific articles (1978-1982 vs. 1999-2002)

3. Changes in spoken expert-layman communication in a casting show (2005 vs. today)

4. Conclusions and outlook

Conclusion

* In written texts, linguistic markers associated with greater indirectness and interactionality are more common in present-day English and German than in the late 1970s / early 1980s.

* Spoken data shows clear decrease of FTAs in expert-layman interaction and decrease of more personal quality face threatening impoliteness.

Conclusion and Outlook

Changes in society between 1970s and today:

* Decline of overt attention to hierarchy
* Democratization and globalization of knowledge
* Globalization of communication (Internet)
* Declining relevance of formal education as predictor of success
* Increasing validation of youth and youth culture
* (cf. Mair 2006: 1-11)

* Further plans: Investigation of other potential candidates for linguistic change driven by these social changes (e.g. boosters, hedges, personal pronouns) in both German and English.

References (1)

❖ Baumgarten, N. (2007) Converging conventions? Macrosyntactic conjunction with English and and German und. *Text and Talk* 27: 139-170.

❖ Baumgarten, N. (2008) Writer construction in English and German popularized academic discourse: The uses of *we* and *wir*. *Multilingua* 27: 409-438.

❖ Becher, V., J. House & S. Kranich (2009) Convergence and divergence of communicative norms through language contact in translation. In *Convergence and Divergence in Language Contact Situations.* K. Braunmüller and J. House (eds.), 125-152. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

❖ Coates, J. (1995) The Expression of Root and Epistemic Possibility in English. In *Modality in Grammar and Discourse.* J. Bybee and S. Fleischmann (eds.), 55-66. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

❖ Collins, Peter (2009) *Modals and Quasi-modals in English.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

❖ Culpeper, Jonathan (2011) *Impoliteness. Using Language to Cause Offence.* Cambridge: CUP.

❖ Crismore, A. and W. J. Vande Kopple. 1997. Hedges and readers: Effects on attitudes and learning. In *Hedging and Discourse. Approaches to the Analysis of a Pragmatic Phenomenon in Academic Texts.* R. Markkanen & H. Schröder (eds.), 83-113. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

❖ Culpeper, Jonathan. (2012). Politeness and impoliteness. In Gisle Andersen & Karin Aijmer (eds.), *Pragmatics of society* (Handbook of pragmatics 5), 393–438. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

References (2)

❖ Culpeper, Jonathan & Oliver Holmes. 2013. (Im)politeness and exploitative TV in Britain and North America: The X Factor and American Idol. In Nuria Lorenzo-Dus & Pilar G.-C. Blitvich (eds.), *Real talk: reality television and discourse analysis in action*, 169–198. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

❖ Hyland, K. (1996) Writing without conviction? Hedging in science research articles. *Applied Linguistics* 17: 433-454.

❖ Kranich, S. (2009) Epistemic modality in English popular scientific articles and their German translations. *trans-kom* 2: 26-41.

❖ Kranich, S. (2011) To hedge or not to hedge. The use of epistemic modal expressions in popular science in English texts, English-German translations and German original texts. *Text and Talk* 31: 77-99.

❖ Kranich, S. (2016.) *Contrastive Pragmatics and Translation. Evaluation, Epistemic Modality and Communicative Style in English and German.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

❖ Kranich, S., J. House & V. Becher (2012) . "Changing conventions in English-German translations of popular scientific texts." In *Multilingual Individuals and Multilingual Societies*. K. Braunmüller and Ch. Gabriel (eds.), 315-334. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

References (3)

❖ Kranich, S. & S. Schramm (2015) "Changes in communicative style in recent German: More interactional, less direct". Paper presented at the 14th IPra, July 2015, Antwerp.

❖ Mair, Ch. (2006) *Twentieth-Century English. History, Variation and Standardization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

❖ Myhill, J. (1995) Change and continuity in the functions of the American modals. Linguistics 33: 157-211.

❖ Spencer-Oatey, H. (2002) Managing rapport in talk: Using rapport sensitive incidents to explore the motivational concerns underlying the management of relations. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34(5). 529–545.

❖ Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008) Face, (im)politeness and rapport. In H. Spencer-Oatey (ed.) Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory, 2nd ed. 11-47. London: Continuum.

❖ White, P.R.R. & M. Sano (2006) "Dialogistic positions and anticipated audiences – a framework for stylistic comparisons." In *Pragmatic Markers in Contrast.* K. Aijmer & A.-M. Simon-Vandenbergen (eds.), 189-214. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

❖ Wilke, J. (1986) Probleme wissenschaftlicher Informationsvermittlung durch die Massenmedien. In *Wissenschaftssprache und Gesellschaft. Aspekte der wissenschaftlichen Kommunikation und des Wissenstransfers in der heutigen Zeit.* Theo Bungarten (ed.), 304-318. Hamburg: Edition Akademion.

33

Thank you for your attention!

skranich@uni-bonn.de

wneuhaeu@students.uni-mainz.de