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

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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.
1. Short overview of previous research on democratization and changes in communicative style
3. Changes in spoken expert-layman communication in a casting show (2005 vs. today)
4. Conclusions and outlook

Overall decline of deontic modality (Jäger forthc.)

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

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English source texts</td>
<td>26 texts</td>
<td>38 texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their German translations</td>
<td>26 texts</td>
<td>38 texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-translated German texts</td>
<td>19 texts</td>
<td>32 texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1: Structure of the popular science corpus

Total word count: 500,000

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

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person pronoun <em>we</em></td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>+134.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence-initial <em>But</em></td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>+32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence-initial <em>And</em></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>+173.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic modal markers</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>+33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First person pronoun wir</strong></td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>+105%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence-initial Aber/Doch</strong></td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>+120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence-initial Und</strong></td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>+400%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemic modal markers</strong></td>
<td>181.3</td>
<td>271.9</td>
<td>+50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequencies normalized per 10,000 words for Und and wir; per 1,000 sentences for Aber/Doch and epistemic modal expressions.
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
1. Short overview of previous research on democratization and changes in communicative style


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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season 4+9</th>
<th>Female judges</th>
<th>Male judges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (FTAs)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

- Season 4-9
  - Musical talent: 50%
  - Performance: 30%
  - Song choice: 20%
  - Looks: 10%
- Season 12+15
  - Musical talent: 60%
  - Performance: 40%
Hypothesis 2
Shift in focus of FTAs’ targets: aiming more frequently at musical talent and less frequently at other quality face categories like looks.
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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.
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 (2)

References (3)

Thank you for your attention!

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