Contrastive Pragmatics

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Contrastive Pragmatics

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Introduction

Increasingly communication takes place between people of different nationalities. This has led to more interest in studying how language is used more broadly than in a single language and a shift from what is universal in language to a greater interest in the interface between what is universal and language-specific (Gumperz and Levinson 1996).

Contrastive pragmatics is concerned with pragmatics or language use in different languages. The field offers a number of challenges as illustrated by the articles in this special issue of *Languages in Contrast* which were originally presented as a panel at the 10th International Pragmatics Conference, Göteborg, in 2007. The articles have in common that they involve more than one language. However, they represent a variety of different perspectives and theoretical approaches such as politeness theory, Conversation Analysis, Appraisal Theory, grammaticalization, 'cultural textology'. Moreover, there is a strong focus on what is culture- and language-specific (cf. Wierzbicka 1985) and on regional (especially dialectal) variation ('variational pragmatics', cf. Schneider and Barron 2008).

Much research has focused on speech acts. In the early days of pragmatics the felicity conditions for speech acts and the means by which they were realised were for instance regarded as universal. However, recent empirical work on speech acts in different languages has shown that there can be large differences in their realization and the rules for how they are used (see Blum-Kulka et al. 1989 on cross-cultural differences between requests and apologies). Another example is challenges. The cross-cultural comparison of challenges in English and German political interviews by Fetzer shows that there are both similarities and differences in how they are used. Not only speech acts but also discourse practices and genres have been seen to vary across cultures and they may change over time. This is illustrated in Luginbühl's article comparing TV news shows in the US and in Switzerland.

The emphasis in this special issue is on the contrastive study of pragmatic phenomena. In several articles (Celle, Defrancq and De Clerck, Noël and Colleman, Becker) the authors show how a multilingual approach can enrich our knowledge of little understood language systems such as evidentiality and modality, and contribute to our understanding of larger issues such as grammaticalization.

Contrastive pragmatics also includes research on more than one language from a foreign language perspective (cf. studies in interlanguage pragmatics, e.g. Kecskes et al. 2005). This is represented in this issue by Guillot's article on interruptions by advanced learners of French. The results have pedagogical implications for language teaching and they can open our eyes to communicative misunderstandings and cultural stereotyping.

Individual contributions

Bernard De Clerck's and **Bart Defrancq**'s contribution shows on the basis of both English and French corpus data that 'it depends' and *ça dépend* have been grammaticalized as (discourse) markers expressing intersubjective positioning. The authors track the movement from lexical meaning to intersubjective uses in answers to questions and in other contexts by means of invited inferences which become generalized or codified. Depending on the context the construction can have the function to motivate the lack of an answer to a question or modulate a previous answer. Intersubjectification is also shown to have formal consequences which are characteristic of grammaticalization such as decategorialization, loss of argument structure, phonetic erosion and coalescence, scope expansion. The processes of grammaticalization are operating in both English and French. However, *dépendr*e (*ça dépend*) has advanced further on the path to discourse marker status.

Dirk Noël and **Timothy Colleman** argue that in both English and Dutch we can distinguish three types of what they call 'nominative and infinitive' constructions (NCI 'nominative cum infinitivo' constructions) exemplified by 'be expected to', 'be said to'. In fact they are examples of three different constructions: a passive NCI (a report sense), a descriptive NCI and an evidential NCI (conveying the source of information). The construction was probably introduced as a loan from Latin in both English and Dutch but it has developed differently in the two languages. In English the evidential NCI construction is productive and useful in journalistic and academic discourse. In Dutch the development is different, although both languages have in common that some evidential NCI patterns have grammaticalized into deontic NCI constructions ('be supposed to').

Modal adverbs may have different meanings even when they seem to have direct translations as shown in **Agnès Celle**'s contribution which presents a contrastive study of modal adverbs in English and French. The focus is on a few pairs such as *évidemment* vs. 'obviously' (and 'evidently') or *apparemment* vs. 'apparently'. Although the adverbs have an intersubjective function, this function is fulfilled differently in English and French. The study is based on a sample of examples from

the French and English editions of *Le Monde Diplomatique* which includes both source texts and translated texts. The French modal adverbs are either identificative (evidential) (*apparemment*, *évidemment*) or restrictive (e.g. *probablement)*. There is a marked difference between the two types evidenced by the fact that they can co-occur (double modality) unlike the corresponding English adverbs.

Annette Becker also discusses modality but from a different perspective since her data consists of British and German political interviews conducted during British and German election night broadcasts. The paper contains a contrastive analysis of modality using the Engagement system within the Bakhtin-inspired Appraisal theory to analyse intersubjectivity (White 2003). A number of different distinctions are introduced representing either dialogic expansion or dialogic contraction. A comparison between the English and German data shows that the BBC interviewers used more resources from the Engagement system than their German colleagues. It is demonstrated that the data can be analysed in terms of dimensions (suggested by House 1996) such as indirectness (English) –directness (German), Orientation towards Other (English) — Orientation towards Self (German). The exceptions could be explained as genre-specific deviations.

The speech act of challenging is discussed in a contrastive English-German perspective by **Anita Fetzer**. Challenges can be understood in a sequential perspective as a responsive contribution and must be analysed in a wider context. They may for instance contain anaphoric devices indexing a proposition in the previous context. For a speech act to be a challenge it must also contain a contrastive (often a negative) element. From an interpersonal point of view a challenge is strongly face-threatening. It is argued that a challenge can be represented as a contextual configuration connecting the challenge with a prior contribution. It is further shown that the British political interviews display a higher frequency of verbs of cognition than the German ones. In the British political interviews challenges can target both the content and the force as well as the presuppositions underlying a contribution. The German data show less variation and there is a preference for challenges referring to the content of a conversational contribution.

The topic of **Martin Luginbühl**'s contribution is to show that the American TV News Show "CBS Evening News" and the Swiss "Tagesschau" can be distinguished with regard to how they stage closeness and how they change over time. On the other hand, explanations such as 'americanization' provide a too simple explanation of what takes place. The data consists of two weeks of reporting of an event such as the invasion of Czechoslovakia in both shows. The analysis focuses on closeness, which includes local, temporal and emotional closeness. The comparison shows that there is not just one global news style — there are differences which can be explained in terms of different cultural practices having to do with

reader-orientation and politeness. With regard to politeness the changes undergone by the Swiss TV news could be seen as a movement away from a 'communication of distance' to a 'communication of closeness'.

The field of contrastive pragmatics has also contributed to second-language studies as shown by **Marie-Noëlle Guillot**'s analysis of interruptions in advanced English learners' French compared with native French speakers and data from L1 English. The study considers interruptions from the point of view of sociopragmatic variation and the tension between pragmatic adaptation and processing demands. The difference in cultural practices means that advanced learners of French have to make adaptations and use French practices and norms. However the processing demands of the interaction may also affect the learners' adaptation to the target language. A second aim is to show that while learners use interruption as a positive feature of argumentative behaviour their use demonstrates a limited grasp of the pragmatic values of interruption. Variations in practices may lead to unfavourable cross-cultural judgments and stereotyping.

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Modality and ENGAGEMENT in British and German political interviews

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Speakers regulary use modality and other resources from the appraisal system of ENGAGEMENT to position themselves intersubjectively. In doing so, they modify the discursive space for the voices of others. This is particularly relevant in political media interviews, especially in questions with topics that are potentially face-threatening to the interviewees' public face. This paper compares the use of modality and other ENGAGEMENT resources in British and German political interviews and discusses the differences in frequency and function. Data is taken from videotaped and transcribed political interviews conducted during British and German election night broadcasts. Their analysis is based on recent studies in contrastive pragmatics, appraisal theory and pragmatically oriented studies on media discourse, bearing in mind that cross-cultural comparison of data taken from a particular genre has to take into account a broad range of contextual factors including genre-specific constraints.

Keywords: modality, ENGAGEMENT, appraisal theory, media discourse, political discourse, English/German

1. Introduction

Generally, the genre of media interviews is not exactly under-researched. Pioneering work on media interviews as institutional discourse has been undertaken mainly within the framework of conversation analysis, especially regarding turn-taking procedures and aspects of sequential organization (e.g. Clayman 1988, 1992; Clayman and Heritage 2002; Greatbatch 1988, 1998; Heritage 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991; Heritage and Roth 1995). This framework has also drawn attention to the fact that questioning turns in face-to-face interaction may be highly complex in their internal structure, as they freqently consist of more than one turn-constructional unit (Linell et al. 2003). At the same time, political interviews

attracted the attention of researchers from social psychology, pragmatics, systemic functional linguistics, and argumentation theory, often in interdisciplinary combinations (e.g. Bull et al. 1996; Bull and Fetzer 2006; Carroll et al. 1987; Jucker 1986; Lauerbach 2004, 2007a).

This paper presents a contrastive analysis of modality and ENGAGEMENT in British and German interviewers' questions from interviews with politicians. It applies the appraisal framework (Martin 2000; Martin and Rose 2003; Martin and White 2005; White 2005), which originated from the analysis of intersubjectivity in monological English text, to a contrastive analysis of selected aspects of the dialogical genre of interviews, and adds some tentative suggestions as to how appraisal theory might benefit from pragmatics. Section 2 gives a brief overview of data and contexts. The connection between modality and appraisal theory is outlined in Section 3. Contrastive quantitative analysisis of the data including suggestions for an expansion of the appraisal framework is presented in Section 4. Sections 5 and 6 provide a discussion of the findings as well as the conclusion.

2.   Data and Contexts

Data is taken from British and German political interviews conducted during election night broadcasts. This macro-genre has only recently been approached from a contrastive perspective (e.g. Lauerbach 2005; Lauerbach 2007b), as have its subgenres such as election night interviews (e.g. Becker 2005; Becker 2007a, 2007b). To faciliate comparison, the analysis concentrates on interviews conducted during election night coverages by major public channels: the *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC) and the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (ARD). At the same time, the focus is on data from elections with a shared political context: a change in government after a long-term period of relatively stable majorities, i.e. the British General Election of 1997, and the German *Bundestagswahl* of 1998. All interviews analysed for the present study were videotaped and transcribed in the context of the research

Table 1. Data Base — Interviews, Questioning Turns, Words.

	BBC	ARD
Interviews	42	24
Questioning turns	254	142
Words	5,714	3,553
Average number of turns per interview	6	6
Average number of words per interview	136	148
Average number of words per questioning turn	22.5	25

project "Television Discourse", supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and directed by Gerda Lauerbach.[1] Table 1 gives a survey of the material used for the present study.

When analysing data from election night broadcasts, it is important to bear in mind the corresponding media contexts and their relationships to political contexts (Hallin and Mancini 2004) as well as the organization of election systems (Denver 2007). For reasons of space, however, the discussion of these aspects will have to be limited here. For the time being, it may suffice to recall what Winston Churchill said in the 1930s about elections in general, because it also holds true for election night broadcasts:

> Whatever one may think about democratic government, it is just as well to have practical experience of its rough and slatternly foundations. No part of the education of a politician is more indispensable than the fighting of elections. Here you come in contact with all sorts of persons and every current of national life. You feel the constitution at work in its primary processes. Dignity may suffer, the superfine gloss is soon worn away; nice particularisms and special private policies are scraped off; much has to be accepted with a shrug, a sigh, or a smile, but at any rate in the end one knows a good deal about what happens and why. (Churchill 1937: 17)

Regarding the face threats (Brown and Levinson 1987) illustrated so colourfully by the former British Prime Minister, interview questions in election night broadcasts are no exception. And interviewers do their best to either cushion the blows, or to deliberately aim at the most vulnerable areas, generously using modality and engagement for both purposes.

3.   Modality and Appraisal Theory

Studies of modality have focused on the modality of single languages such as English (e.g. Facchinetti 2003; Facchinetti and Palmer 2004), on modality in whole branches of languages, such as Germanic languages (Swan and Westvik 1997), or Slavonic languages (Hansen and Karlik 2005), or on contrastive comparisons between modality in different languages (Celle 2006; El-Shaar 2005). Within the appraisal framework (Figure 1), modality plays a central role in the appraisal systems of ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION, especially modality seen in a broad perspective, encompassing all linguistic resources used by speakers to indicate their attitudes regarding the truth or likelihood of the propositions they present. Such a broad view is taken e.g. by Simon-Vandenbergen (1996) in her analysis of modality in political interviews, where she treats "any lexicogrammatical choices which
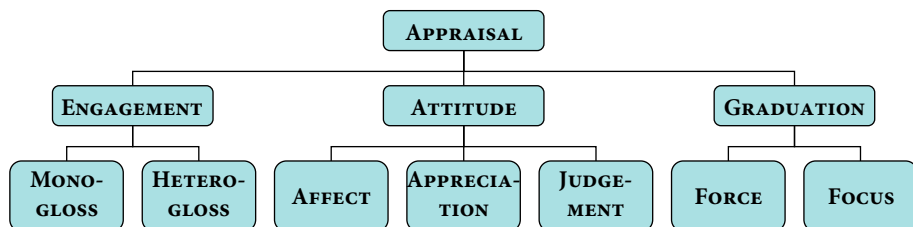
Figure 1. The appraisal framework.
(based on Martin and White 2005: 38)

convey these attitudes towards one's claim […] as modal expressions, so that the notion of modality is not restricted to any specific formal category. Rather, modal expressions form an open-ended class" (Simon-Vandenbergen 1996: 391). Consequently, an appraisal analysis of German data also needs to consider modal particles, trying to consider their communicative functions as boosters or downtoners and treating them within the corresponding appraisal categories.

Within the appraisal system ENGAGEMENT, the main distinction is between MONOGLOSSIC and HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT. MONOGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT refers to the exclusion of alternative positions, as in (1), whereas HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT refers to the recognition of alternative positions (2–5):

> MONOGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT — no recognition of dialogistic alternatives

(1)   The XY party has lost the election

> HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT — recognition of dialogistic alternatives

(2)   The XY party <u>might</u> have lost the election

(3)   I <u>believe</u> the XY party has lost the election

(4)   It <u>seems</u> the XY party has lost the election

(5)   <u>Apparently</u>, the XY party has lost the election

According to appraisal theory, all unmodified declaratives — or, to use the terminology of Linell et al. (2003), 'statements' and the 'statement' parts of questioning turns[2] — should be interpreted as MONOGLOSSIC. MONOGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT may also be realized by presuppositions (6):

(6)   BBC-14-1   (Jeremy Paxman/Cecil Parkinson, Cons; David Steel, Liberal
                  Democrat; Neil Kinnock, Lab; JP to CP)
                  Cecil Parkinson, er [MON] you're now chairman of a fertilizer
                  firm erm [MONpres] <u>how deep</u> is [MONpres] <u>the mess</u>
                  [MONpres] <u>you're in</u> at present?

>> there is a deep mess
>> the mess is deep
>> the interviewee is in it

At the same time, the juxtaposition of the fertilizer firm of which the interviewee is the chairman and the mess he is presupposedly in conveys the particularized conversational implicature (Grice 1975) that the mess might have some rather unpleasant qualities, as in the ruder version of 'to be in a deep mess', namely 'to be in deep sh**', which the audience is invited to make associations with. Within the appraisal system, evaluations of this kind are, however, not treated under ENGAGEMENT but under ATTITUDE and therefore not discussed in detail here.

Within HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT, Martin and White (2005) observe two different dialogical orientations, each orientation being realized by two distinct subcategories. Depending on the types of intersubjective positioning, the main distinction is between 'dialogic expansion' and 'dialogic contraction'.

The first type of dialogic expansion, ENTERTAIN, comprises "wordings by which the authorial voice indicates that its position is but one of a number of possible positions and thereby, to greater or lesser degrees, makes dialogic space for those possibilities" (Martin and White 2005: 104). If speakers[3] make dialogic space for such options, they ENTERTAIN or invoke them with the help of characteristic lexicogrammatical choices, many of them modal expressions in the broad sense mentioned above:

> ENTERTAIN: by explicitly presenting the proposition as grounded in its own, contingent, individual subjectivity, the authorial voice represents the proposition as but one of a range of possible positions — it thereby ENTERTAINs or invokes these dialogic alternatives:
>
> – it seems, the evidence suggests, apparently, I hear
> – perhaps, probably, maybe, it's possible, in my view, I suspect that, I believe that, probably [sic[4]], it's almost certain that…, may/will/must
>
> (Martin and White 2005: 98)

Conditionals and subjunctives are left out at this point by the authors, but admitted later as further possibilities for the realization of ENTERTAIN. An interesting point is the inclusion of the future tense. Generally, appraisal theorists treat utterances about future events as inherently HETEROGLOSSIC because of the uncertainty of the future as such (White 2005). Therefore, even very confident assertions about future events fall into the subcategory ENTERTAIN. For the present study, however, this dimension of ENTERTAIN was ignored, firstly because the aim was to identify modality-like resources, and secondly because of the politically motivated topic differences within the two sets of data that are closely connected to the different

voting systems: post-election talk about potential future coalitions is marginal to nonexistent in countries with a plurality system or first-past-the-post-system (FPTP) such as the U.K., whereas such topics actually dominate post-election talk in countries with mixed systems such as Germany, with inevitable consequences for the proportion of utterances in the future tense, which may result in a misleading amount of items from the appraisal system ENGAGEMENT.

The second type of dialogic expansion, ATTRIBUTE, adds external voices that may be quoted either directly or indirectly:

> ATTRIBUTE: by presenting proposition [sic] as grounded in the subjectivity of an external voice, the textual voice represents the proposition as but one of a range of possible positions — it thereby entertains or invokes [sic[5]] these dialogic alternatives:
>
> – X said…, X believes…, according to X, in X's view
> – X claims that, it's rumoured that
> (Martin and White 2005: 98)

On the other hand, speakers may partially or totally exclude other voices by using linguistic resources from the dialogically contractive subsystems of PROCLAIM and DISCLAIM. According to Martin and White, PROCLAIM is used to stress the validity of the speaker's position:

> PROCLAIM: by representing the proposition as highly warrantable (compelling, valid, plausible, well-founded, generally agreed, reliable etc.), the textual voice sets itself against, suppresses or rules out alternative positions:
>
> – naturally…, of course…, admittedly…, etc.
> – I contend… the truth of the matter is…, there can be no doubt that…, etc.
> – X has demonstrated that…; as X has shown…, etc.
> (Martin and White 2005: 98)

Whereas PROCLAIM can be seen as reinforcement or confirmation, DISCLAIM is associated with various forms of negation and contrasts:

> DISCLAIM: the textual voice positions itself at odds with, or rejecting, some contrary position:
>
> – negation (You don't need to give up potatoes to lose weight.)
> – concession/counter expectation (Although he ate potatoes most days he still lost weight.)
> (Martin and White 2005: 97)

In the interview data analysed for the present study, DISCLAIM was occasionally also realized via conventional indirectness such as conventional implicature (Grice 1975), as in (7):

(7)   BBC-10-2   (Jeremy Paxman/Malcolm Rifkind, Cons)
      Just so we're clear that the cabinet is [DISC] <u>at least</u> united on
      uh this matter […]
      +> the cabinet is not united on many other matters

The ENGAGEMENT subsystems that come closest to epistemic modality are the subsystems ENTERTAIN and PROCLAIM, with ENTERTAIN referring to the presentation of propositions as predominantly grounded in a speaker's perspective, i.e. some subjective reality, and PROCLAIM referring to the presentation of propositions as predominantly grounded in some objective reality. However, the distinction between these two categories is not clear-cut. This is not altogether surprising, because the large grey zone between objectivity and subjectivity is notoriously difficult to chart. For instance, the adjective 'plausible' is a case in point, as well as the modal adverb 'certainly'. Both words may be used for both purposes i.e. for both ENTERTAIN and PROCLAIM, depending on speaker intention and context.

Questions are generally interpreted as HETEROGLOSSIC because all markers of interrogativity may transform MONOGLOSSIC utterances into HETEROGLOSSIC ones (Martin and White 2005). However, there are questions that are 'more HETEROGLOSSIC' than others, because they contain more markers of HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT, so that a quantitative contrastive analysis of the occurrences of these items in the data may yield differences regarding the degree of heteroglossia. Additionally, complex questioning turns may even contain MONOGLOSSIC elements, which may also be studied contrastively. And last but not least, the choice of voices and subjectivities that are mentioned in order to expand or contract the dialogical scope of questions deserves a closer look, especially when examining political media interviews (Lauerbach 2006).

Appraisal theory has not yet treated this systematically. But an analytic framework for political interviews might add the following three orientations that combine the grammatical category of person and the tripartite face model for political interviews developed by Bull et al. (1996): (1) the voice or subjectivity of the interviewers and their institutions, (2) the voice or subjectivity of the interviewees, their parties, and important others within these parties, and (3) the voice or subjectivity of others belonging to neither of these two categories.

This is especially apparent for the subcategories of HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT which explicitly introduce, or have subcategories that introduce, additional voices into the discourse, such as ATTRIBUTE and PROCLAIM.[6] Additionally, this paper proposes a similar outlook for ENTERTAIN, where voices may be referred to implicitly, e.g. by asking 'What is <u>your view</u>?', or 'How would <u>he feel</u>?', and even — at least in traces — for desemanticized discourse markers such as *ich meine* ("I mean").[7] In a further data-driven expansion of the appraisal system, this study also

proposes a dialogic dimension of DISCLAIM, arguing that voices used to corroborate a counter-position are not treated under PROCLAIM, but instead as reinforcements of DISCLAIM.

The background of these assumptions is that interviewers frequently introduce additional voices into the discourse in order to superficially maintain their neutrality (Clayman 1988), while they are actually building an argument, often in search of inconsistencies with an interviewee's previous utterances (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 226–227), or of discrepancies within the addressee's party, a technique which is also known as "split hunting" (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 227). They do so more subtly via ATTRIBUTE, and less subtly with the help of DISCLAIM and PROCLAIM.

For these three HETEROGLOSSIC subsystems of ENGAGEMENT, our tripartite model may help to identify whose voice is being integrated. This may be done either self-referentially (8), or by quoting the addressee (9) or members of the addressee's party (10), or by quoting third parties (11):

(8)   BBC-32-1   (David Dimbleby/Michael Heseltine, Cons)
        Mr Heseltine when [ATTR1] we talked before we were [ATTR1] talking and [ATTR1] flirting with the idea, as so often in interviews with you, about the leadership of the Conservative Party […]

(9)   BBC-8-4   (Martin Beshear/Edwina Currie, Cons)
        You [ATTR2] said earlier that if the Tories lost disastrously then you would recommend that John Major shouldn't, [ATTR1] in your words, hang about.

(10)   BBC-3a-7   (Jeremy Paxman/Michael Portillo, Cons)
        [DISC1] We counted [DISC2] two hundred and fifty-four personal manifestos issued by [DISC2] candidates of your party which took a different line to [ATTR2] the official party line.

(11)   BBC-8-8   (Martin Beshear/Edwina Currie, Cons)
        Mr Michael Portillo has been mentioned as a potential leader [PROC] in fact uh by a number of the national newspapers, [PROC3] they are naming him as the favourite.

Additionally, potential positions of the addressee may be put forward. This technique is also known as 'formulation' (Heritage and Watson 1979):

(12)   BBC-2-2   (David Dimbleby/Brian Mawhinney, Cons)
        Er [ATTR2] are you saying you accept that Labour has won?

Let us now turn to the quantitative examination of the data.

4. Comparison

All in all, the BBC interviewers used more resources from the appraisal system ENGAGEMENT than the ARD interviewers did. In the BBC data, ENGAGEMENT resources occurred 151.7 times per 1,000 words, and in the ARD data 141.0 times per 1,000 words (Figure 2).
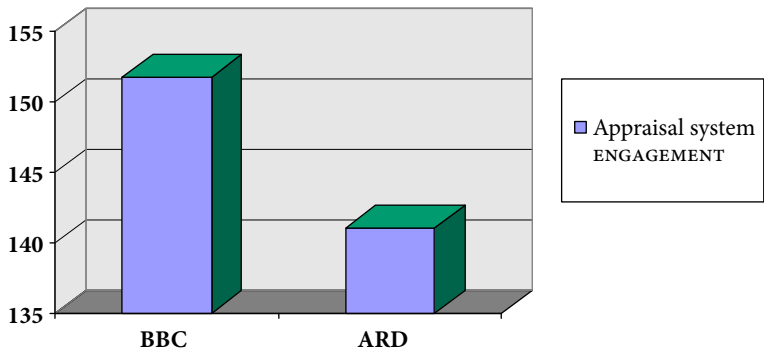

Figure 2. The appraisal system ENGAGEMENT.

Within both sets of data, HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT was used more frequently than MONOGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT. Differences between channels were only marginal in the case of HETEROGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT, which appeared only slightly more frequently in the British data than in the German data (BBC: 114.1,[8] ARD: 112.6); but more significant in the case of MONOGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT (BBC: 37.7; ARD: 28.1) (Figures 3a and 3b).

ENGAGEMENT	BBC		ARD	
	n total	n per 1,000 words	n total	n per 1,000 words
HETEROGLOSSIC	652	114.1	400	112.6
MONOGLOSSIC	215	37.7	101	28.1
Total	867	151.7	501	141.0

Figure 3a. HETEROGLOSSIC and MONOGLOSSIC ENGAGEMENT.