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Pragmatic Markers in Contrast

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DIALOGISTIC POSITIONS AND ANTICIPATED AUDIENCES – A FRAMEWORK FOR STYLISTIC COMPARISONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is directed towards one important aspect of stylistic variation – variability in how speakers/writers position themselves intersubjectively with respect to other speakers and with respect to potential respondents to the current communication. More specifically it is directed towards this positioning in the context of public, mass communicative (rather than private, person-to-person) discourse. Here such positioning acts to construct for the text a putative addressee or audience as the speaker/writer[1] is presented as assuming that this addressee operates with particular beliefs and values, and as anticipating certain responses and reactions on this addressee's part. The meanings by which such positioning is conducted linguistically are many and varied, including locutions which would perhaps typically be regarded as 'pragmatic markers' as well as those which would not. Within the appraisal framework of Martin, White, Iedema, Feez, Rothery, Coffin, Macken-Horarik and Fuller under which this paper operates (see for example, Iedema et al., 1994, Christie & Martin, 1997, Coffin, 1997 and 2003, Rothery & Stenglin, 1997, White, 1998, Martin, 2000, White, 2002, Macken-Horarik & Martin, 2003 and Martin & White, in press, Fuller, 1995, 1998), this set of meanings is dealt with under the heading of 'engagement'. Our purpose in this paper is to offer some further insights into locutions which operate with what can be termed this 'dialogistic' functionality. More narrowly the paper is concerned with a subset of these engagement meanings – those formulations which signal a recognition that the current proposition is a contentious or a dialogically problematic one which is likely to be in tension with alternative propositions, and those by which the speaker implicitly lays claim to agreement and solidarity with the putative addressee. While these meanings are considered primarily in the context of English, our subsidiary purpose is to attend to issues of cross-linguistic comparison, exploring how we might conduct analyses which would compare and contrast dialogistic positioning as it operates in comparable texts in different languages.

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[1] In this paper we employ the term 'speaker' to cover both speakers and writers, unless otherwise indicated.

Towards this end we consider dialogistic positioning in a comparison of press conferences delivered by the British and Japanese prime ministers.

Our primary focus is upon markers which, in the literature, are typically treated under such headings as 'epistemic modality' (see for example, Coates, 1983, Palmer, 1986), 'evidentiality' (see, for example Chafe & Nichols, 1986), hedging (see for example Markkanen & Schröder, 1997), and less specifically under the heading of 'meta-discourse' (see, for example, Crismore, 1989). Specifically we attend to,

- locutions which construe different degrees of probability – e.g. in English, adjuncts such as *possibly, perhaps, probably and definitely*; related impersonalizing formulations such as *it's possible that, it's probable that*; modal auxiliaries such as *may, might, must*; and personalizing locutions such as *I suspect that..., I believe, I think, I'm sure, I know,* etc,

- evidentials such as *it seems, apparently*

- formulations by which the speaker overtly announces propositions as self-evident or very generally known or accepted – e.g. in English, *of course, naturally, obviously, needless to say, it goes without saying, as you know,* etc

Our approach to these locutions is informed by Bakhtin/Voloshinov's now widely influential notions of dialogism and heteroglossia under which all verbal communication, whether written or spoken, is 'dialogic' in that to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners. As Voloshinov states,

> The actual reality of language-speech is not the abstract system of linguistic forms, not the isolated monologic utterance, and not the psychological act of its implementation, but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances.
>
> Thus, verbal interaction is the basic reality of language.
>
> Dialogue...can also be understood in a broader sense, meaning not only direct, face-to-face, vocalised verbal communication between persons, but also verbal communication of any type whatsoever. A book, i.e. a verbal performance in print, is also an element of verbal communication. ...[it] inevitably orients itself with respect to previous performances in the same sphere... Thus the printed verbal performance engages, as it were, in ideological colloquy of a large scale: it responds to something, affirms something, anticipates possible responses and objections, seeks support, and so on. [Voloshinov 1995: 139]

And as Bakhtin similarly observes, all utterances exist

...against a backdrop of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements ... pregnant with responses and objections" [Bakhtin 1981: 281].

This perspective leads us to attend to aspects of the communicative functionality of these locutions which have frequently not been considered by those whose theoretical orientation has been shaped by British/American analytical philosophy and a concern with truth functionality (see for example, Lyons, 1977 and Palmer, 1986). Thus while earlier treatments have tended to interpret modals and evidentials as signs of lack of commitment by the speaker to the truth value of the proposition, we are directed, rather, to attend to the intersubjective, dialogistic effects associated with such meanings. In the sections which follow, we set out an account of these dialogistic effects and offer some preliminary observations about how such accounts can be applied to comparative analyses of the evaluative styles of different texts and different speakers, both within texts of the same language and across different languages.

2. DIALOGISTIC POSITIONING

2.1 The monoglossic and the heteroglossic

Before we attend to these locutions individually, it is necessary to outline the broader parameters by which dialogistic positioning may vary both within a language and between languages. In English we observe a contrast between utterances in which propositions are barely asserted without any explicit acknowledgement of the dialogistic and heteroglossic setting in which the text is operating, and those which do reference and engage with this heteroglossic backdrop. For example the following sequence of barely asserted propositions:

1. Saddam is a threat. That is why for 12 years the United Nations has been trying to get him to disarm Iraq peacefully of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons... We live today in a world beset by international terrorism, whose groups are desperate to acquire ever more dangerous weapons, and who are already using chemical and biological poisons. [*from a press conference by the British Prime Minister in the lead up to the US and UK governments' invasion of Iraq in 2003*]

can be contrasted with,

2. The resolution stated clearly that Saddam was already in material breach of UN disarmament demands, it gave him what it was said was a final opportunity to comply or face serious consequences.... It is plain, in our judgement, that Saddam continues to be in breach.

or with;

3. The basis of our action is disarmament. That is the UN mandate. <u>Of course</u> I understand the concerns of the thousands that marched on Saturday, and <u>of course</u> I should and do listen to those concerns.

In extract 1 the speaker makes bald assertions negatively evaluating the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and the state of security in the world. The propositions are formulated in such a way that that there is no recognition of the possibility of alternatives to the speaker's viewpoint, nor anticipation by the speaker that any of these propositions will be in any way problematic for those being addressed. In extract 2, in contrast, the speaker executes a somewhat complex dialogistic manoeuvre with respect to the proposition that the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was in breach of the United National resolution. By the locution *it is plain*, he indicates an anticipation that the addressee will find this an unproblematic viewpoint which he/she will share with the speaker. However, he then complicates the positioning by means of *in our judgement*, acknowledging that this is a matter of personal opinion and hence potentially just one viewpoint among a range of potential alternative positions. In extract 3, the speaker is presented as anticipating that the information about to be conveyed will be so self-evident for the addressee that the statements barely needs to be uttered at all.

There is a tradition within English linguistics within which the barely asserted proposition, as exemplified by extract 1, is characterised as intersubjectively neutral, objective or 'factual'. Lyons, for example, sets up a contrast between the supposed 'objectivity' of the bare assertion, which he terms 'factive', and the 'subjectivity' of the modalised utterance, which he terms 'non-factive' (Lyons 1977: 794). But of course once we understand all verbal communication as occurring against a heteroglossic backdrop of other voices and alternative viewpoints, then we are likely to view the 'bare' assertion in a rather different light. Following Bakhtin we see the bare assertion as constituting a particular, potentially highly charged intersubjective position – one by which the current proposition is construed as either having no alternatives or challenges at all, or as having no alternatives or challenges which need to be acknowledged or engaged with in the current communicative context. We classify such formulations as 'monoglossic', once again following Bakhtin, in recognition of the way they present the speaker as a solitary voice unengaged with any dialogic partners or alternatives. These contrast broadly with the formulations exemplified by extracts 2 and 3, where the speaker presents himself variously as (a) acknowledging that there is a heteroglossic backdrop of alternative views and multiple voice with which he is likely to be in tension (*in our judgement*) and, (b) as sensitive to where others are likely to stand on the proposition being advanced (*it's plain* and *of course*). We employ the term 'heteroglossic' to label all formulations which, in these and other ways, acknowledge that the utterance operates against a heteroglossic backdrop and present the speaker as recognising or engaged with other voices and other viewpoints within this backdrop.

English, then, operates with this broad, binary distinction between the monoglossic and the heteroglossic. As a starting-point for comparative analyses of speakers' interpersonal styles we might begin by exploring where, how often, and with what type of utterances they employ monoglossic versus heteroglossic modes of expression. We should note, however,

with an eye to the application of the framework to cross-linguistic analysis, that while this two-way division operates in English, this may not always be the case in other languages. Here we have in mind those now well-documented languages in which there is no obvious equivalent to the English 'bare assertion'. These are languages in which all utterances are in some way marked for their evidential status or for the grounds on which the speaker offers the information or opinion. We can mention here, by way of just one example selected largely at random from the literature, the Wanka dialect of Quechua. According to Floyd (1996), in Wanka propositions are associated with one of three evidential suffixes indicating either that the speaker bases the statement on conjecture (*-chr(a)*), on reported evidence (*-sh(i)*) or on direct, first-hand personal experience (*-m(i)*) (Floyd, 1996: 70). The crucial point here is that what, from the perspective of English, we might think of as the most 'direct', 'objective' or 'factual' mode of expression, the proposition with the suffix *—mi(i)*), nevertheless still involves speakers explicitly declaring their personal evidential 'interest' in the proposition. It would appear that even with this 'direct' form, speakers are still explicitly presenting the proposition as grounded in their own individual and contingent subjectivity. To the extent that this characterisation is accurate, we can say, then, that in Wanka (and similar languages) all utterances are heteroglossic in that even the most directly assertive formulations still present the proposition as subjectively contingent and hence as but one of a range of possible alternative propositions. If we were to seek to compare the interpersonal styles found in such languages with the interpersonal styles of English, we would need to allow for the possibility that the underlying dialogistic dispositions of the two languages may be fundamentally different, with Wanka apparently not operating with the binary distinction between the monoglossic and the heteroglossic which we observe in English (and similar languages).

2.2   Dialogistic expansion and contraction

Within those formulations which operate heteroglossically we observe a further broad distinction according to whether they are 'dialogically expansive' or 'dialogically contractive' in their intersubjective functionality. The distinction turns on the degree to which an utterance, by dint of the use of one or more of these 'engagement' options, actively makes allowances for dialogically alternative positions and voices (dialogic expansion), or alternatively, acts to challenge, fend off or restrict the scope of such (dialogic contraction). The distinction is illustrated in the following extracts which, like the previous extracts, have been taken from press conference statements by the British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair. (Formulations which 'contract' or 'expand' in this way have been underlined.)

4. (*dialogic expansion*)
    And I remember when we didn't intervene in Bosnia back in the early 1990s and tens of thousands of innocent people died as a result, and I think probably it would have been better had we intervened.

7. (from BBC radio 4, *Any Questions*)

   Well the question was whether Tony Blair would wish Mr Hoon to be gone now or later and <u>one does have the feeling</u> that Mr Hoon is being saved up for the end of the Hutton inquiry when he will be presented as the animal on the sacrificial pyre. Personally <u>I think</u> that he is tarnished, <u>I think</u> his behaviour was – at the intelligence committee – was inexcusable. He didn't tell a lie but he quite deliberately <u>I think</u> gave a misleading impression. And his behaviour at the Hutton inquiry was even more extraordinary in the way that he ducked and dived and <u>you can't really</u> have a minister exposing his evasiveness to that extent, let alone a defence minister. <u>I think</u> however that the hue and cry over Mr Hoon is however a monumental distraction. Everybody wants a scalp and it's good fun, it's good sport but <u>I think</u> that the underlying issue is much more serious, <u>the underlying question</u> which has been concerning all of us for several months <u>is whether</u> we were lied to and whether the government exaggerated the case for war in taking us to war in Iraq. And <u>my own personal view is</u> so far, so far, <u>from the evidence that's been produced</u>, <u>I think</u> that it is completely plain that we were not lied to, the government made a perfectly responsible case based on the available intelligence, that we went to war quite properly.

The interpersonal profile revealed by the analysis is one in which the speaker passes numerous quite highly charged value judgements but typically does so in a dialogistically expansive way. All but four of her 14 evaluative propositions are framed with a value of 'entertain'. As well, the speaker makes one prediction (1), one assessment of obligation (7) and three times claims knowledge of other people's thoughts, intentions or feelings (5,9,13). Both the prediction and the assessment of obligation are construed in dialogistically expansive terms. Two of the three claims about other people's thoughts and feelings are monoglossed, making this the only type of proposition for which the speaker does not favour a dialogically expansive mode of expression.

One point requiring further discussion does emerge from this analysis – the dialogistic status of *I think*. This particular pragmatic marker has received a good deal of attention in the literature (see, for example, Urmson, 1952, Hooper, 1975, Lysvåg, 1975, Palmer, 1986, Aijmer, 1997, Simon-Vandenbergen, 1998, 2000). Under the systemic functional linguistics of Michael Halliday and his colleagues (see, for example, Halliday, 1994, Martin, 1992, Matthiessen, 1995, Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999) it is analysed (along with related locutions such as *I believe that, I suspect, I know that*) as realising the modal value of 'probability' (see Halliday, 1994: 254). Palmer, following a similar line of reasoning, holds that the formulation conveys an 'epistemic judgement' (Palmer 1986:168) There has been some debate about the effect on propositions framed by *I think*, with some of the earlier work holding that the effect is a weakening or softening one (see Hooper, 1975). However, later work by Aijmer (1997) and Simon-Vandenbergen (2000) has demonstrated compellingly that *I think* occurs just as readily with forthright, confident and strongly assertive statements as with utterances which can be seen as in some way tentative or uncertain. Thus while *I think* may suggest uncertainty when used in the context of uncontentious, 'factual' propositions (for example, *I think Mary*

upcoming dialogic interaction is reduced. Accordingly, such formulations are classified as 'dialogically contractive'.

2.3   Dialogic expansiveness – 'entertain'

The range of dialogistic contractive and expansive resources is too large for us to consider in any detail in this paper. Beyond so-called epistemic modality, evidentials, and adjuncts such as *in my view*, dialogic expansion also includes hearsay, various types of attribution and some types of rhetorical question, while the resources of dialogic contraction include other types of attribution, adversatives, concession, negation and other types of rhetorical question. For a full account, see Martin & White, in press. For the purpose of this paper we direct our attention to one sub-type of dialogic expansion, that typically realised through so-called epistemic modals and evidentials and given the label 'entertain' in the appraisal literature. (See White, 1998, White, 2000/2000a, White, 2003, Martin & White, in press.) The dialogistic functionality of these values has already been addressed in the earlier discussion of *in our judgement, I think, probably* and *in my view*. As indicated there, these are locutions which explicitly ground the proposition in the speaker's subjectivity and thereby construe the view being advanced as contingent and potentially in tension or alternation with dialogistically divergent positions. These formulations thus 'entertain' dialogic alternation.

By considering where and how often a speaker employs values of 'entertain' it is possible to model one key aspect of stylistic variation – the degree to which, and the contexts in which, the speaker is presented as acknowledging, and opening up the dialogic space for, alternative voices and positions. Such analyses can be applied to develop comparisons of different stages in a given text, different texts, different speakers and different collections of texts. We demonstrate such analyses by means of the following short treatment of an extract from a BBC radio topical discussion programme, *Any Questions*. In the analysis, all instances of 'entertain' are identified and all clause-level propositions (whether or not they are associated with a value of 'entertain') are classified according to whether they involve:

- assessments of obligation
- positive or negative evaluation
- counter-expectation
- prediction
- generalisation
- statements about causes or effects
- surmise with respect to the thoughts or feelings of others

The text is firstly presented with instances of 'entertain' identified with underlining and then an analysis of propositions is provided.

All these accounts are broadly compatible with our view of I *think* (and related formulations) as explicitly grounding the proposition in the speaker's subjectivity and thereby construing the proposition as contingent and but one of a number of possible propositions in the current communicative context. Our research, however, points us towards another possibility with regard to the communicative effect of *I think* which has not, to our knowledge, so far been identified or discussed in the literature. In our study of a corpus of transcripts of some 40 hours of spontaneous topical discussion and debate from the BBC radio programme *Any Questions* (transcripts of 54 45-minute programmes), we found that *I think* occurs with a dramatically higher frequency than any of the other values of 'entertain'. Thus *I think* occurred with an average frequency of 6.74 instances per 1000 words, while the frequencies for other 'entertain' values were as follows:

> *I believe*: 0.22 per 1000 words (around 30 times less frequent than *I think*)
> *I suspect*: 0.14 per 1000 words (around 48 times less frequent than *I think*)
> *I know*: 0.31 per 1000 words (around 22 times less frequent than *I think*)
> *perhaps*: 0.36 per 1000 words (around 19 times less frequent than *I think*)
> *possibly*: 0.12 per 1000 words (around 56 times less frequent than *I think*)
> *probably*: 0.45 per 1000 words (around 15 times less frequent than *I think*)

Table 2: Frequency of *I think* across individual BBC programmes

	text with the highest frequency (instances per 1000 words)	text with the lowest frequency (instances per 1000 words)
I think	15.5	3.1
I believe	0.55	0.12
I suspect	0.79	0.12
I'm sure	0.66	0.12
perhaps	1.07	0.12
possibly	0.69	0.12
probably	1.29	0.13
may (all uses)	2.55	0.14
might (all uses)	1.58	0.12
must (mostly obligation rather than probability)	1.72	0.12

It was not possible to ascertain the frequency for epistemic uses of the modal auxiliaries, since, obviously, automatic corpus lookup is unable to distinguish, for example, between *may* when used to realise probability and *may* when used to realise permission, and we were not in a position to manually tag occurrences. But even when all uses of the modal auxiliaries are included in the count, they are significantly less frequent than instances of *I think*. For example,

teaches French) it is typically entirely compatible with authoritativeness and a high degree of conviction when used with evaluative propositions. The speaker's use of *I think* in extract 7 above is illustrative of what Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen have termed 'deliberative' function.

Table 1: Analysis; dialogic expansiveness (Propositions which do not fall within the scope of an 'entertain' value have been underlined.)

'entertain value'	proposition	evaluation	obligation	counter-expect	prediction	generalisation	cause or effect	other's cognitive
one does have the feeling that	(1) Mr Hoon is being saved up for the end of the Hutton inquiry when he will be presented as the animal on the sacrificial pyre	X			X			X
personally I think	(2) he is tarnished	X						
I think	(3) his behaviour was – at the intelligence committee – was inexcusable.	X						
	(4) He didn't tell a lie	X						
I think	(5) he quite deliberately gave a misleading impression	X						X
	(6) And his behaviour at the Hutton inquiry was even more extraordinary in the way that he ducked and dived	X		X				
you can't really	(7) have a minister exposing his evasiveness to that extent, let alone a defence minister	X	X					
I think	(8) however that the hue and cry over Mr Hoon is however a monumental distraction.	X						
	(9) Everybody wants a scalp					X		X
	(10) it's good fun	X						
	(11) it's good sport	X						
I think	(12) the underlying issue is much more serious	X						
	(13) [the question] has been concerning all of us for several months					X		X
the underlying question is whether	(14) we were lied to; (15) the government exaggerated the case for war in taking us to war in Iraq.	X						
my own personal view is; from the evidence that's been produced; I think	(16) it is completely plain that we were not lied to, (17) the government made a perfectly responsible case based on the available intelligence, (18) that we went to war quite properly	X						
'entertain value'	proposition	evaluation	obligation	counter-expect	prediction	generalisation	cause or effect	other's cognitive

other values of 'entertain'. By way of demonstration consider the comparative ratios for the Blair spontaneous corpus (ten press conferences) and the Blair non-spontaneous corpus (ten prepared speeches.) See Table 3:

Table 3: Comparative ratios for the Blair spontaneous and non-spontaneous corpus

	Blair spontaneous (rate per 1000 words)	Blair non-spontaneous (rate per 1000 words)
I think	5.2	0.23
I believe	0.43	0.59
I suppose	0.00	0.10
I'm sure	0.00	0.11
perhaps	0.38	0.25
possibly	0.00	0.15
probably	0.23	0.33
definitely	0.00	0.00
may/might	0.82	0.97
must (mostly obligation)	1.70	0.20

For values other than *I think*, frequencies are roughly equivalent across the two modes of language, with some locutions occurring more frequently in the spontaneous discourse (*perhaps, must*) and others more frequently in the non-spontaneous discourse (*I believe, I'm sure, possibly, probably, may/might*). It is also noteworthy that in the non-spontaneous corpus, *I think* occurs with a lower frequency than *I believe, perhaps, probably* and *may/might*.

This evidence is strongly suggestive that in spontaneous, opinionated, spoken language of a type represented by these corpora, *I think* is in some significant way different in its functionality, or at least in some aspect of its functionality, from the other 'entertain' values. The fact that its behaviour is only anomalous with respect to the other 'entertain' value in the context of spontaneous, spoken language is suggestive that it may be a reflex or marker of opinionated spontaneous speech. It suggests that there is a base line which is set for this type of language by which a relatively high frequency is the norm. One possible consequence of this is some de-lexicalising or de-semanticising effect. Sinclair has discussed this effect in the context of collocational co-selections:

> The meaning of words chosen together is different from their independent meanings. They are at least partly delexicalized. This is the necessary correlate of co-selection. If you know that selections are not independent, and that one selection depends on another, then there must be a result and effect on the meaning which in each individual choice is a delexicalization

all uses of *may*: 0.89 per 1000 words (around 8 times less frequent than *I think*)
all uses of *might*: 0.6 per 1000 words (around 11 times less frequent than *I think*)
all uses of *must*: 0.52 per 1000 words (around 13 times less frequent than *I think*)

Even larger discrepancies are revealed when we consider frequencies across individual texts (transcripts of individual programmes). See Table 2.

The following extract demonstrates a typical use of *I think* in texts of this spontaneous, opinionated and argumentative type.

8. [BBC radio 4 – Any Questions, 14/11/2003]
The February anti-war march caused real friction in our family because my daughter went off to the march with my husband and I was very, very pro-war and stayed at home with my son. But I could understand why they did it because I think then it was legitimate to say what you felt about the war because it hadn't yet started and there was a reason to go on a march and to say what you felt and to try and make your opinion heard. Now I think we've had the war, I think it's ludicrous to try and block it anymore, I think what we should be doing is rallying together to try and make sure that it works in Iraq, that we can work together, that we can look to the future and that we have got servicemen out there and that we should be supporting them and that they are doing a fantastically good job and they are risking their lives every single day to do this. And I think that's where we should be supporting them. I think also also if you look at the interview that President Bush gave today in the Telegraph and the Financial Times he was actually falling over himself to be as really as relaxed as he could and especially about the march and he was saying that he thought there was a great deal of freedom in Britain and he admired the fact that we could go on marches. He was also saying he wasn't going to try and take this war any further, that he wasn't going for the axis of evil. And I think that that's the great benefit that the British can have is that this relationship with America means that we can actually have a restraining influence if we want to and I think that's very important for us. I think the French went the other way and it means they have no influence at all.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that *I think* is used in this way, and with this frequency, in spontaneous, opinionated or argumentative spoken language, but not in comparable types of written language. For example, we find that *I think* occurs at an average frequency of 5.2 instances per 1000 words in a corpus of ten largely off-the-cuff press conferences by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, but at a frequency of 0.23 per 1000 words (just the one instance) in a corpus of ten of Mr Blair's prepared speeches (taken at random from the Downing Street website). Similarly we find *I think* occurring at a rate of 8.92 per 1000 words in the spontaneous contributions of Ziauddin Sardar, one of the participants in one of the *Any Questions* discussions, but no instances in a corpus of ten of his commentary pieces published in the *New Statesman* magazine. This clear-cut difference between spontaneous and non-spontaneous discourse does not appear to apply, or at least is not of the same magnitude, for

Table 4: The frequency of *I think* for different speakers in the Any Questions broadcasts

speaker	total of instances	rate per 1000 words
thomson	49	31.37
alli	28	23.37
bercow	26	17.99
fortier	12	14.25
willetts	25	13.56
phillips	25	12.99
duncan	17	12.51
steel	17	10.73
oaten	11	10.39
jowell	19	10.06
foulkes	18	9.87
fabiani	13	9.19
sardar	8	8.92
hughes	18	8.31
mercer	7	6.83
moisi	7	6.07
keetch	10	5.76
graffy	6	5.26
cashman	6	4.88
roberts	4	3.38
guerot	4	2.53

2.4 Dialogic contraction – 'concur'

The resources of dialogistic expansion – of which 'entertain' is one sub-type – stand in contrast to resources of dialogistic contraction, as outlined above. Once again we do not have the space here to consider the full repertoire available in English and for illustrative purposes focus on just one sub-type. (For a full account of all resources of dialogic contraction, see Martin & White, in press: chapter 3.) These are what, within the appraisal framework are termed values of 'concur' – meanings by which the speaker is presented as anticipating that the information about to be conveyed will already be known by the addressee or that the view about to be expressed is one which the addressee will inevitably agree with and share with the speaker. Thus these are meanings by which the speaker construes a relationship of alignment and solidarity – of 'concurrence' – with the purported addressee he/she is construing for the text. In English this dialogistic position is conveyed via locutions such as *of course, naturally, obviously, as you know, needless to say*, and *it goes without saying*. For example,

> of one kind or another. It will not have its independent meaning in full if it
> is only part of a choice involving one or more words. [Sinclair 1994: 23]

It seems plausible that the principle is more generally applicable and that the more 'automatic' the use of a particular linguistic item in a given context (i.e. opinionated spontaneous speech), then the less 'meaning' will be carried by its presence in the text. It is plausible, therefore, that, in comparison with the other 'entertain' values, *I think* is to some degree de-semanticised and accordingly does not so strongly convey dialogistic expansiveness as these other options. It must be stressed that this effect would only apply with 'default' uses of the locution – that is to say when the *I think* is unstressed and in clause initial position. When, in contrast, the *I think* is stressed, has its own tone group and/or occurs clause medially or finally, then full optionality is restored and accordingly so is the full dialogistically expansive effect. We observed one such non-default use of *I think* in an earlier example, where the *I think* occurred clause medially with an obviously dialogically expansive effect.

> He didn't tell a lie but he quite deliberately, I think, gave a misleading
> impression

However, this is not to suggest that *I think* is so automatised in this type of text that it has lost all its interpersonal functionality. In this regard we note that, in our corpus of *Any Questions* broadcasts, the frequency of use of *I think* varies very substantially between different speakers. The following variation was observed across the participants in five programmes (see Table 4).

This indicates that a significant optionality still applies to the use of *I think* and that a significant variation in style may result as a consequence of speakers more frequently or less frequently using this locution.

As a consequence, we believe any exploration of dialogistic expansiveness as an axis of stylistic variability needs to attend to instances of *I think*, but that it is wise to distinguish uses of *I think* from uses of the other values of 'entertain' on the grounds that *I think* may be less strongly dialogistically expansive than these other resources. Thus we would note, in the analysis conducted above with respect to extract 7, that it was *I think*, rather than other options, which was employed by the speaker in the majority of cases. Similarly, we would expect significantly different dialogistic effects in texts where, for example, locutions such as *I believe, in my view, definitely, perhaps, probably, as I see it*, and *in my judgement* were used in place of *I think*.

These various concurring formulations, then, are dialogistic in that they present the speaker as 'in dialogue' with their audience generally. They are contractive in that they represent the shared knowledge, value or belief as universally, or at least as very widely, held in the current communicative context. Thus they have the effect of excluding any dialogistic alternatives from any ongoing communicative exchange in that they position anyone who would advance such an alternative as at odds with what is purportedly generally agreed upon or known. Accordingly, they construe for the text a backdrop which is heteroglossic in that it contains multiple voices (the authorial voice and those it is purportedly in concord with), but from which dissident voices and positions are excluded.

By attending to how often and with respect to which propositions the speaker employs such locutions, we are able to map another highly significant line of stylistic variation. Such analyses provide for comparisons of speakers with respect to the degree they lay claim to a knowledge of what the addressee knows and takes for granted. In order to demonstrate such an analysis we supply below all the instances of 'concurrence' from the press conference by British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair which we referenced above. We follow the same procedure as adopted in our earlier analysis, although in this case we have not analysed continuous spans of text but rather isolated just those propositions which are associated with a 'concurrence' value. We have added the category of 'experiential' for propositions which can be seen as describing real world events without also providing evaluation, assessments of obligation, surmise or prediction. The category of 'inclination' has been added alongside that of 'obligation' to capture those propositions where the speaker is outlining his own willingness, inclinations or desires (see Table 5):

Table 5: Types of concurrence value associated with propositions

'concurrence value'	proposition	evaluation	obligation or inclination	experiential	future / prediction	generalisation	cause or effect	own/ other's cognitive
obviously	(1) Obviously I will take questions on any issues you want to raise.		X					
of course	(2) Of course I understand the concerns of the thousands that marched on Saturday.	X						X
of course	(3) and of course I should [listen]		X					
of course	(4) and do listen to those concerns			X				

'concurrence value'	proposition	evaluation	obligation or inclination	experiential	future event / prediction	generalisation	cause or effect	own or other's cognitive
obviously	(5) Most of the people who are concerned, who went on the march, are not actually in the position of being against conflict in all circumstances, though obviously some are.							X
leading question	(6) Is it reasonable, after 12 years of flouting previous UN resolutions, that Saddam is given a final chance to fulfil them?	X						
leading question	(7) Is it reasonable to ask Saddam to account for the weapons that independent UN inspectors have said remain unaccounted for?	X						
leading question	(8) Is it reasonable to ask Saddam to let weapons inspectors speak to the scientists and experts that worked on his programmes, without those people fearing for their lives or being intimidated?	X						
as you know	(9) And as you know there are situations in which I suppose in politics you have to manoeuvre your way round certain issues		X					
obviously	(10) This is something obviously that has to be discussed not just with allies, but with the UN and with people inside Iraq.		X					
obviously	(11) Obviously my preference is that the more that we can at least set ourselves on a path towards greater democracy the better		X					
of course	(12) Well my reaction to that is that of course there are Iraqi children suffering from malnutrition today.			X				
of course	(13) So yes of course there are consequences we have to guard against, and we will guard against those		X					
of course	(14) If I thought we were going to unleash something in which hundreds of thousands of people were going to die, we were going to have more Bin Ladens, the Middle East was going to go up in flames, no of course I don't believe that that is the case							X
obviously	(15) It is important at least, and that is why obviously we can only communicate in the end through the people here.			X				

other parts of speech) will vary according to the social identity and status of the speaker, and degrees of deference, distance or familiarity between interlocutors. This act of choosing a level of politeness can be seen as dialogistic to the extent that speakers thereby construe for themselves an addressee with whom they enter into a particular relationship of equality/inequality and distance/familiarity. Nevertheless, the monogloss versus heterogloss distinction holds in Japanese in that there are 'bare' forms which, even when marked for politeness, do not present the speaker as referencing or responding to what others might have said previously, as recognising the possibility of other viewpoints, or as anticipating particular responses or reactions on the part of the actual or putative addressee.

There was a clear difference between the texts in terms of the use the two speakers made of the monogloss option. Seventy-four propositions in the British text were barely asserted (52 percent of the total propositions) whereas only 31 propositions (17 percent) in the Japanese text were construed in this way. There were also differences in the profiles of the proposition which were formulated in this way. In the English text this monoglossic mode of expression was regularly used with evaluative propositions (27 instances, 36 percent of total monoglossic utterances). For example,

> Saddam is a threat.
>
> They have a rightful hatred of the consequences of war.
>
> Iraqi co-operation is the reasonable and easily delivered requirement of the international community.
>
> it is the very nature of Saddam, how he operates is history, how he treats his people, that mean that in his hands these weapons of mass destruction are all the more dangerous.

and also with propositions by which the Prime Minister asserted what should and should not happen (12 instances, 16 percent of monoglossic assertions). For example,

> the basis upon which we act has to be the disarmament of Iraq of weapons of mass destruction
>
> These are threats best dealt with by a unified international community.
>
> it is worth people understanding that there are also consequences of not taking action in terms of bloodshed

Thirteen (18 percent) of the monoglossic utterances involved content which could be classified as essentially 'informational' or 'experiential'. For example:

> he is the only leader who has used them [weapons of mass destruction]
>
> he is the only leader still in power that has twice declared war on his neighbours

[groups] who are using chemical and biological poisons

However we note that even here many of these 'experiential' meanings had a clear potential for triggering attitudinal assessments on the part of the listener.

In contrast, in the Japanese text, monoglossed 'informational/experiential' propositions substantially outweighed the monoglossed evaluative propositions. Specifically, 69 percent of the monoglossed propositions in the Japanese Prime Minister's contributions were essentially 'informational' in this way. For example,

> *kotoshi wa, 3 gatsu kara, Aichi ken de banpaku ga kaisai-saremasu.*
> (In this year, from March, in Aichi prefecture, an international exposition will be held)

> *sudeni yuubin ni shitemo, aruiwa kodutsumi ni shitemo, cyokin ni shitemo, hoken ni shitemo, minkan de yatteiru zigyoo de arimasu.*
> (Already, postal service, delivery service, banking, insurance are the jobs that are managed privately.)

Some 31 percent of monoglossed propositions were evaluative. For example,

> *kore wa nihon ni tottemo kooki de aru, chansu de aru to.*
> (This comes at a good time and is a [good] opportunity for Japan.)

> *tuduite honyosan, koremo ima, daizi na keizai no kyokumen ni kiteorimasu.*
> (and about the main budget, this issue is also occurring at an important point in the economic cycle).

None of the seven instances in the Japanese text where the Prime Minister made assessments of what should or should not happen were monoglossed (compared with the 12 instances of monoglossic assessments of obligation in the British text).

The contrast which emerges from this analysis is one in which it is predominantly only 'factual' uncontentious propositions which the Japanese Prime Minister treats as dialogically inert (no recognition required of alternative view points and voices) while the British Prime Minister, with great regularity, construes potentially contentious evaluations and assessments in these dialogistically inert terms.

3.1.2 Dialogistic expansiveness – 'entertain'

Japanese has available a range of resources by which the proposition is explicitly grounded in the speaker's contingent subjectivity and by which, thereby, the possibility that the speaker is in tension with alternative voices and viewpoints is recognised. These include, by way of some examples,

soo da (look, appear to be), *rasii* (it seems), *yoo da* (it appears that), *mitai da* (it appears that); *-kamo sirenai* (might), *- kasira [kanaa]* (I wonder), *(-ni) cigainai* (must, certainly) and *omoo* (I think/believe) (See Teruya 1998, from which we have taken some of these examples, for further discussion.).

The British Prime Minister employed values of 'entertain' on 15 occasions (around 11 percent of total propositions) while the Japanese Prime Minister employed them on 41 occasions (around 22 percent of total propositions.) For the British Prime Minister, they are typically used in the context of evaluative propositions (7 out of 15 uses). For example,

It is plain, in our judgement, that Saddam continues to be in breach.

I think they are very, very powerful testimonies as to the nature of the regime Tony Blair

He also used them with some regularity (5 instances) in combination with assertions of what should or should not happen.

I think there are certain situations in which you have simply got to say to people look this is what I believe

The Japanese Prime Minister also typically used these dialogistically expansive formulations in the context of evaluative propositions (22 out of 41 instances) and with assertions of what should and shouldn't happen (7 instances). For example,

genzai no koosha no keitai yorimo minkanzin ni keiee wo makaseta hoo ga, yori kokumin no saabisu koozyoo ni tunagaru no dewa naika to. (Rather than the current system of the public corporation, if (we) leave the management to private ownership, that would provide a better service for the public.)

minasamagata mo taihen gokuroo no ooi toshi data to omoimasu ((I) think that the last year was a tough/hard year for lots of you too.)

The analysis demonstrates a high degree of similarity in the uses to which these two speakers put these meanings (signaling openness to dialogistic alternatives when advancing evaluative propositions), though clearly they differ in the frequency with which they adopt this dialogically expansive stance, with the Japanese Prime Minister almost twice as likely to employ values of 'entertain' as the British Prime Minister.

A further point of similarity is revealed when we focus on the *I think* form (as discussed at length above) and its nearest Japanese equivalent *omoo* (and its various conjugational variants). The *I think/omoo* form is by far the most frequent value of 'entertain' in both texts (9 out of 15 instances of 'entertain' in the Blair text; 36 instances out of 41 in the Koizumi text), though the preference for this form is substantially greater in the Japanese than in the

British text. The Japanese Prime Minister's use of this form is reminiscent of the use made of *I think* in the *Any Questions* discussions cited above. For example, compare extracts 7 and 8 above with the following extract from the opening of the Japanese Prime Minister's address.

> *Shinnen, omedetoo gozaimasu. sakunen wa, nihon ni okimashitemo, taihuu, zishin, shuuchuu-goou too, ookina higai wo uke, minasamagata mo taihen gokuroo no ooi toshi data to omoimasu, higaisha no minasan-gata mo, ima, hukkyuu, hukkoo katsudoo ni tutusinde orareru to omoimasu ga, zehi tomo kono konnan kara tatiagatte, aratana shinnen wo mukaemasite, kiboo wo motte tiiki no hukkoo ni torikunde itadakitai to omoimasu.*

> (Happy New Year. Last year, Japan (as in other countries) suffered damage from typhoon, earthquake, heavy rain, etc. (I) think that the last year was a tough/hard year for lots of you too. Although (I) think/imagine that those who suffered from the damage are working hard for restoration, (I) think that you will overcome this difficult situation, enter a new year and work on with the restoration with hope.)

This leads us to postulate that the same de-semanticisation effect which we hypothesized as operating in English with *I think*, may be operational in Japanese with *omoo*. It is interesting to note, that if we exclude instances of *I think/omoo* from our analysis, then the Japanese Prime Minister makes less use of values of 'entertain' than the British Prime Minister. Obviously further research is required to establish the degree of variation in the use of *I think/omoo* across different social settings and different types of texts.

3.1.3 *Dialogic contraction – 'concur'*

Our earlier discussion of 'concur' established that the British Prime Minister makes quite regular use of this meaning, thereby constructing a discursive persona which assumes substantial solidarity and common knowledge with those being addressed. The Japanese text did not contain any clear-cut instances of this value. There was just one marginal instance:

> *"minkan ni dekirukoto wa minkanni", "gyoo-zaisei-kaikaku wo dankoo seyo", "koomuin wo hearse" to iu koto ni tuite wa, hotondo subeteno too ga sansei siteorimasu*
> Most parties agree with "privatising institutions under public management", "carrying out the reformation of administrative and financial system" and "the reduction of the number of public servants.

It would seem, then, that Japanese Prime Minister differs from his British counterpart in construing a more socially distant relationship between himself and his journalistic questioners – one in which there is little overt signalling of an assumption of commonality and mutual knowledge. We do note that the majority of Mr Blair's assumptions of solidarity

are self directed. He assumes that his questioners will be entirely familiar with his thoughts and inclinations and that his good intentions will be self-evident to all. In this regard, Mr Blair might be seen as more self-involved than Mr Koizumi.

4.   CONCLUDING REMARKS

By this account, then, we hope to have demonstrated the new insights provided by a dialogistic understanding of pragmatic markers such as *I think, indeed, of course,* and *needless to say.* Under this perspective, the division which is often drawn between these so-called 'markers' and the 'grammar', on one side, and the 'lexis' on the other, dissolves as we observe these apparently different types of meaning all contributing to the negotiation of dialogistic positioning. We have also demonstrated how this framework can provide for cross-linguistic comparisons in which the focus is not upon isolated, individual meanings but upon the systemic opportunities languages provide for the speaker to construe for their texts particular heteroglossic backdrops and putative addressees.

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