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30

**Fachsprachen in der  
weltweiten Kommunikation**

**Specialized Language  
in Global Communication**

**Akten des XVI. Europäischen  
Fachsprachensymposiums, Hamburg 2007**

**Proceedings of the XVIth European Symposium  
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**Walther von Hahn / Cristina Vertan  
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*'As previous researchers have found...'* – **dialogic Endorsement in Social Psychology Research Articles**

*Lucia Abbamonte / Flavia Cavaliere*

### **1. Introduction**

The present study lies in the research domains of Appraisal (Martin 1997, 2000), and, more specifically, of dialogic Endorsement in Research Articles (RAs). The term 'Appraisal' is used as an umbrella term to include all evaluative uses of language by which speakers/writers assume particular value positions or stances and by which they negotiate these stances with either actual or potential respondents. Appraisal – i.e. the evaluative use of language – performs the following functions: Attitudinal, Dialogistic and Intertextual Positioning (White 2005).<sup>1</sup> This theoretical approach has emerged over the last decades as a result of a work originally conducted by a group of researchers led by Prof. James Martin of the University of Sidney. Works in developing the Appraisal Framework (AF) are now being carried out internationally and seminal publications include, apart from Martin (1995,1997,2000), Iedema, Feez and White (1994), White (1998, 2000), Rothery and Stenglin (2000), Martin and White (2005) among others.

What makes the AF a highly useful, versatile model or system is the way it re-considers many traditional separate headings such as modality, polarity, evidentiality, meta-discourse, or hedging/boosting, concession, attribution vagueness, without perhaps reshaping nor refining them but rather re-ordering them. It brings together

lexico-grammatically diverse wordings [...as]  
resources which vary the terms of the speaker's

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<sup>1</sup> Attitudinal Positioning implies a positive/negative assessment of people, places, things, state of affairs; Dialogistic Positioning means that every word/utterance is refracted through a host of other (antagonistic) idioms; Intertextual Positioning takes place when a writer/speaker quotes or refers to the words or thoughts of someone else.

engagement with propositions and proposals, [...] both in individual utterances and as the texts unfolds cumulatively (White, 2003: 259 our emphases).

In RAs Endorsement<sup>2</sup> takes place in the context of a ‘dialogic’ deferred exchange among researchers of the same scientific discourse community. Before highlighting the traits of AF which are more functional to our analysis, it is useful to illustrate Voloshinov and Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism, which played a pivotal role in shaping the ‘schema’ of AF:<sup>3</sup>

Dialogue, in the narrow sense of the word, is of course only one of the forms – a very important form, to be sure – of verbal interaction. But 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 (1929) 1995: 68].

As Bakhtin (1930) maintained in *The Dialogic Imagination*, dialogic work does not move in a social vacuum, indeed it entails situated action and maintains on a continual dialogue with other works and other authors. It does not merely answer,

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<sup>2</sup> Broadly, Endorsement can be defined as the range of ways available to writers/speakers to quote other writers/speakers.

<sup>3</sup> The complexities of the relationship between Bakhtin and Voloshinov cannot be considered here, it is only necessary to remember that, in recent years, some of the works which bear the name of the latter were attributed to Bakhtin (e.g. *Marxism and Philosophy of Language*). Later on, this opinion has fallen out of favour, though Bakhtinian influences are undeniable.

correct, silence, or extend a previous work, but informs and is continually informed by the previous work.

Dialogism is a dense word if any. Far from referring to a polite exchange of words and opinions between willing participants, it is better understood when contrasted with ‘monologism’, i.e. the feared meta-language which tries to subdue the irrepressible heterogeneity of language, and is, as Terry Eagleton (2007) highlights, a euphemism Mikhail Bakhtin had to use for Stalinism. Dialogism and its complementary notion, heteroglossia, consider speech as being real only in the context of social interaction.<sup>4</sup> In a dialogic perspective, the meaning of words or utterances appears to be construed in the context of other utterances, implementing human communication in given contexts, to the exclusion of other endless, unpredictable choices. Verbal signs acquire meaning in their orientation to other signs.

As far as scientific discourse is concerned, the scope for the unpredictable is much more limited: hybridity and multi-acculturality are constrained within the prescriptive norms that regulate scientific communication and its specialized genres, such as Research Articles (RAs) and Letters (RLs). We should remember that in scientific communication authorial inter-subjective positioning is usually presented as statements of ‘objective, scientific truth’ as far as possible. However, this does not imply that utterances in those fields are not ‘dialogic’ and that scientific communication takes place in a ‘context-less’ dimension or in a social vacuum, but, rather, that it follows different norms. From the recent past onwards, research work and activities are increasingly being construed in the context of the ongoing research in specific territories and niches, and,

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<sup>4</sup> Leaving behind the well ordered Saussurian and structuralist synchronic analyses and models, and moving thus from language to discourse studies, Bakhtin’s notion of verbal communication as virtually hybrid, multi-accultural and unpredictable seem to anticipate to an extent post-modern responsiveness to alterity and open-endedness, or, more generally, to post-structuralist concepts of textuality. It is not surprising that Bakhtin’s work suddenly gained popularity in the 1970s -1980s in France, in the US and United Kingdom when the notion of intertextuality took shape.

analogously, the modes of communication have to comply with the target discourse community norms. As Ken Hyland (2004) very effectively explains in his *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*, academics use language to organise their professional lives and research work, collectively establishing what will be recognized and assessed as knowledge. He explores the relationships between the cultures of different academic communities and their unique discourses – engineers “report”, while philosophers “argue”, and biologists “describe” – and the relationships between writers and their readers in published academic writing.<sup>5</sup> From Hyland’s analyses, not only texts, but the process of the construction of knowledge as well, emerge as the result of social interaction.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Aims

Our main purpose is to examine and assess the value and functions of Endorsement in RAs of Social Psychology –RAs being the most widely used academic genre for acquiring/disseminating information and findings. While reporting their research and/or experiments, RA authors seem to assume attitudes which notably vary from (and within) Introductions through Methods and Results up to Discussions –

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<sup>5</sup>“This is because rhetorical practices are closely related to the purposes of the disciplines and the ways they create knowledge. While this does not determine the ways we use language, it means disciplinary credibility and understanding can only be achieved through participating in communities and connecting with their socially determined and approved beliefs and value positions [Hyland , 2005:2]”.

<sup>6</sup> An interpretative framework for the reading is also provided (Hyland, 2004): Intertextuality, hedging in knowledge making, boosters in significance negotiation, constructing an expert identity, analysing the ideological/economic power of academic discourse, and the authority of discourse in disciplinary practices, focusing on writer variation, social shifts and discourse change – being the more inspirational issues.

at epistemic as well as evaluative levels. Among the linguistic resources that play a major role in persuading and engaging the reading audience are citation practices, reporting and 'coming-to-know' verbs, and evaluative lexis. Quotations and references are crucial to scientific discourse, and are chosen not only according to an implied relevance criterion, but also as preceding functional steps of the ongoing research. They are essential to engage the scientific community at global level into reading and accepting the work as belonging to a reliable tradition of studies. Endorsement has therefore become a constitutive part of Introductions, and, to a lesser degree, of Conclusions/Discussions as well.

The manner and measure in which writers' commitments to the propositions expressed in their statements vary is discussed mainly in line with Martin and White's AF. In particular we intend to investigate both the way the authorial voice is expressed, its inter-textual positioning (Endorsement/Dis-Endorsement/Non-endorsing) and the dialogic Engagement (Disclaim; Proclaim; Entertain; Attribute). Our analysis also highlights how in scientific communication Endorsement can play a debate-generating role, and can become instrumental to dialogic expansion, rather than to contraction, which is, instead, the general prediction in the AF.

We will try to show the discursive/dialogic quality of the different kinds of Endorsement in Social Psychology RAs. We shall see how the authorial attitudes and stances are graded, vary, display scaling intensity, sharpen /soften the focus.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

AF – which has developed into a major, highly productive academic industry – has inspired many other frameworks and tools for genre and discourse analysis. The resources by which speakers/writers negotiate the arguability of their utterances, within the AF, are grouped under the heading of

“Engagement”.<sup>7</sup> The resources included within Engagement are all ‘dialogistic’ in so much as they are all means by which speakers/writers represent themselves as engaging in a ‘dialogue’. They take up, acknowledge, respond to, challenge or reject actual or imagined prior utterances from other speakers/writers or anticipate likely or possible responses from other speakers/writers. In other words, they are dialogic in that, to different degrees and in different ways, they all acknowledge or invoke representations or points of view which are to some degree different from the representation/point of view currently being advanced by the text. Thus, within this alternative positioning the speakers/writers present themselves as engaged dialogically. Among the resources of Engagement, the more functional to our analysis is Endorsement, that has been defined as the

attribution or intertextual positioning brought into play when a writer/speaker chooses to quote or reference the words or thoughts of another [...] relevant to his/her current communicative purposes. Thus the most basic intertextual evaluation is one of implied ‘relevance’ (White 2005).

Endorsement through quotations and references are crucial in RAs to engage the scientific community at global level into accepting the work as belonging to a reliable tradition of studies. Research hypotheses have either to be rooted in previous studies, or take them into account: in RAs Introductions and Conclusions especially, the discourse unfolds through referring to previous specialized literature, which must be the starting point of current research.

Scientific communication appears to take place in a context where credibility is achieved through a ‘dialogic exchange’ with members of the same community, where beliefs, theories, research hypotheses, data and results are negotiated. Researchers need to make clear whether they choose to continue an existing tradition or to limit their commitment to it, or to deny its

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<sup>7</sup>Attribution; modality; hearsay; concession; polarity; evidentiality; hedges; boosters; metadiscursives.

validity. Every time they have to outline their position in their domain, by defining the orientation of their work in relation to other pre-existing work, and thus they have to refer or to quote other scientists' theories, hypotheses and results, either endorsing or dis-endorsing them to varying degrees.

The analysis of such dialogical exchanges requires what Halliday and Hasan (1976: 24) defined as a 'delicacy of focus'. Not only quantitative, but also qualitative data are therefore necessary since the full value of words/sentences may be 'appraised' only in their Textual Context (TC). When dealing with dialogistic expansion and meta-discursives, differences can be subtle.

#### **4. Method**

##### *4.1. Description of the tools and procedure*

In order to identify and analyse the dialogic quality of such selective communicative exchanges, as those that we find in RAs, it is necessary to use specific tools for the evaluation of inter-subjective stance, in particular, for the analysis of Endorsement,<sup>8</sup> with its variety and gradation of possibilities, from the simple binomial Endorsement /dis-endorsment, up to the cline of extra versus intra vocalisation. How does Endorsement actually take place?

When speakers/writers choose to quote or reference the words or thoughts of (and adopt a stance towards) other speakers/writers, it is usual to talk about "attribution", "direct and indirect speech", "intertextuality" and, following Bakhtin, "heteroglossia". By referencing the words of another, the writer indicates that these words are in some way relevant to his/her current communicative purposes: the most basic intertextual evaluation is one of implied relevance. Accordingly, in RAs Endorsement is a significant aspect of academic writing as engagement with both content and dialogue in rhetorical

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<sup>8</sup> Dialogic Contraction: Proclaim, Endorse, Disclaim vs. Dialogic Expansion: Entertain, Attribute.

situations – in Hyland’s words “the way writers present their topics, signal their allegiances, and stake their claims, represent careful negotiations with, and considerations of, their colleagues (Hyland, 2006:36)”. It is thus a matter of positioning, not only towards the issues discussed but also towards researchers who hold similar or different opinions on those topics, in a kind of deferred inter-subjective dialogue, where authorial stance ranges from strong Endorsement to dis-Endorsement. The endorsed utterance is represented as true, reliable, convincing: the writer either directly or indirectly indicates support for/ agreement with another/others. When using non-endorsing utterances, the authors remain neutral with respect to the words/beliefs of other authors they quote. When dis-endorsing, writers distance themselves from the utterance, indicate that they take no responsibility for its reliability, or reject or deny the attributed proposition.

Since it is not always possible, however, nor perhaps advisable, to adopt tout court the same instruments for different kinds of texts – in line with the post-modern absence of consensus on a new and universally applicable critical paradigm (see Selden 1995; Hillis Miller 2006, among others) – we resorted to additional, flexible tools for analysing Endorsement in RAs, as will be illustrated in our presentation. We should also point out that AF mainly deals with media communication, aimed at large/global audience/s – i.e. Media Commentary and Journalistic voice – rather than specialized communication. It explores the way language is used to evaluate, to adopt stances and to construe textual personas in the world of the media.

Academic discourse communities, conversely, follow a very different set of rules both discipline-and-genre-specific in their professional interaction, to pursue their different communicative goals. As far as scientific discourse is concerned, the scope for the unpredictable is much more limited: hybridity and multi-acculturality are constrained within the prescriptive norms that regulate scientific communication and its specialised and globally utilised genres, such as RAs.

Furthermore, in coherence with the shared notion that the full value of words and sentences can be understood and ‘appraised’ only in their textual context, we did not consider de-contextualised lexical items, but we tried to evaluate how they work in their own TCs, through the operation of adequate, specific instruments. Our procedure will consist in quantitative and qualitative computer-based textual analysis of the materials described below.

#### 4.2. *Corpus*

We selected a corpus of 40 Research Articles of Social Psychology published in 2006, drawn from leading journals of Social Psychology circulating at global level, and precisely, 40 Research Articles chosen from the following refereed international Journals

○	British Journal of Social Psychology	16
○	European Journal of Social Psychology	10
○	The Journal of Social Psychology	8
○	Asian Journal of Social Psychology	4
○	South African Journal of Social Psychology	2

For a total of 318236 running words.

The source is EBSCO publishing, a far reaching medium of research on line, distributing 750 Journals of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, which has considerable status in the contemporary web-wired academic scientific community. The RAs considered are written in English – the ‘tyrant’ globalising lingua franca of Research (Swales 1997) – both by English native speakers and non-native speakers, and were selected on the basis of relevance and impact factor. We selected a small specialized corpus to ‘keep in touch’ with the texts and their TC, and, in addition to quantitative data, we also extracted a sample

of qualitative data to better illustrate the quality of authorial positioning.

#### 4.3 Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The analysis of recurring En-/Non-/Dis-endorsing linguistic features (according to, see, e.g. author's name and year) in the authors/researchers ways of quoting/citing other authors are well illustrated by a cline – Stronger, Weaker, More Neutral Endorsement :

<b>STRONGER</b>	<b>WEAKER</b>	<b>MORE NEUTRAL</b>
Reported Speech	Paraphrase/summary	Quote (Author's name + year)
According to	e.g.	
	See	

Here follow the occurrences in a corpus of 318236 running words:

<b>According to</b>	<b>ENDORISING</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	<b>e.g.</b>	<b>e.g.</b>
90	272	454

<b>ENDORISING</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>see</b>	<b>see</b>
248	Not considered

<b>Simple quotes</b> (author's name + year)	<b>More endorsing quotes</b> (signpost + Author's name +year)

1888	1040
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We also analysed the occurrences of ‘Endorsement-entailing’ terms:

<i>found</i>	<i>research</i>	<i>researchers</i>	<i>study</i>	<i>studies</i>
232	932	188	944	326

Here follows a sample of Qualitative Data:

<b>Strong Endorsement</b>	<b>Discursive/explicit self-Endorsement</b>	<b>Dialogic – discursive partial dis-Endorsement</b>
<p><i>As Lakoff &amp; Johnson (1980/2003 p.269) noted recently, “Cognitive Psychology is dominated by the old idea that concepts are all literal and disembodied”</i></p> <p>EurJrnSocPsy , 36, (2006) p. 150</p>	<p><i>It is very encouraging as we start on this new road that scholars in such disparate research domains are drawing such similar conclusions from their work</i></p> <p>EurJrnSocPsy , 36, (2006) p. 164</p>	<p><i>Although several studies corroborated the distinctiveness account of illusory correlations, some of those results have since been challenged</i></p> <p>BritJrnSocPsy (2006) 45 p. 259</p>
<p><i>The distinctiveness account gained support from studies that revealed</i></p> <p>EurJrnSocPsy , 36, (2006) p. 316</p>	<p><i>This research has been impressive in demonstrating the wide scope of unconsciously instigated influences</i></p> <p>EurJrnSocPsy , 36, (2006) p. 148</p>	<p><i>Whilst some progress has been made in...our knowledge remains rather one-sided</i></p> <p>BritJrnSocPsy (2006) 45 p. 259</p>

		<p><i>To some, however, these impressive empirical demonstrations have become an embarrassment of riches, our empirical knowledge has outstripped our ability to understand and conceptualize</i></p> <p>EurJrnSocPsy , 36, (2006) p. 148</p>
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Table 1.

<b>More neutral/distant Endorsement</b>	<b>Rephrasing (weaker Endorsement)</b>	<b>Positive endorsing phrases</b>
<i>There has been recurring theoretical debate</i>	<i>In their classic article, French and Raven (1959) understand power broadly as...</i>	<i>Consistent with earlier studies...</i>
<i>Researchers on the self have demonstrated that people</i>	<i>In contrast, Moscovici (1976) distinguishes between power and influence</i>	<i>More specifically the findings are consistent with....</i>
<i>Since the end of the Second World War, social psychologists have become</i>	<i>As Turner (2005) argues even the meaning of reward and</i>	<i>The findings can also be related to Platow's work on...</i>

<i>increasingly aware</i>	<i>sanctions</i>	
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Table 2.

<b>Factual Endorsement</b>	<b>Dis-Endorsement</b>
<p><i>The present authors will review representative literature regarding independent-interdependent self-construals in North American and Asian samples and will then introduce two hypotheses</i></p> <p>JrnSocPsy 2006,146 (5) p.593</p>	<p><i>Although the present results are consistent with past research, researchers should not take them without a grain of salt</i></p> <p>TheJrnSocPsy 2006,146(4), p. 479</p>

Table 3.

### 5. Results and Discussion

From our data it is evident that the most common way of citing other researchers' works is the more neutral author's- name -and -year formula, with and without a signpost expression, followed by 'e.g.', 'see', Endorsement-entailing words, and 'according to'. So far as reported speech, paraphrase/summary are concerned, computer based analysis has, predictably, not given clear results – further qualitative analysis will be necessary. A preliminary thematic analysis has been made necessary for the verb 'see': we decided to exclude the total occurrences of 'see', because they were much higher in Psychology articles about perception, and to calculate only the occurrences of endorsing 'see'. Concerning Endorsement-entailing words, a distinction needs to be made between study and research, which refer to the ongoing research and are therefore self-endorsing to an extent, and studies and researchers, which refer to previous research. Since we had decided to count the word 'research', in the construction of the corpus we had to eliminate articles on research methods, where its frequency was obviously much

higher. When ‘delicacy of focus’ and attention to the TC are required, a small specialized corpus is definitely more functional.

An additional insight for our data and a springboard for further research might be to use Skelton’s classification of the ways in which writers report. In his own words things which are believed to be true, possible, and untrue are defined as contextualized truth, evidential truth, and interpreted truth. These correspondingly stand for truth as enunciated by the research tradition, truth as the statistical evidence states it to be, and truth “as a matter of deriving possible non-statistical meaning from findings” (Skelton ,1997:128 ).

Space limits prevented us from providing a wider selection of qualitative data. The present sample, however, together with the quantitative data, should be sufficient to illustrate how essential dialogic Endorsement is to the dynamics of the deferred inter-subjective dialogue of RAs. There is also scope for overtly evaluative authorial attitude, as when in the first example in Table 2 the researchers use Lakoff & Johnsons’ criticism of old CogSci ideas to support/express their own criticism.

In the epistemological dimension of RAs, dialogistic Endorsement plays a pivotal role which can be described as a cline, needs to be contextualized, and leads to discursive expansion rather than contraction. Indeed, Dialogistic Endorsement substantiates scientific communication, and far from leading to dialogic contraction, as is generally believed in the AF, it opens new possibilities: from the recent past onwards, research work and activities are increasingly being constructed in the context of the ongoing research in specific territories and niches, progressively expanding them. Quotations and references are crucial to scientific discourse as a preceding functional step of the research in progress.

These dialogistic resources involve meanings which are ‘negotiatory’, and maintain a continual dialogue with other researchers, a polyphony of authorial voices, which informs and is informed by other works in the process of continuously re-shaping knowledge.

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