



## *Big Brother* Germany and Spain: a Linguistic Characterization from a Theory of Register<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The aim of this paper is to justify the suitability of using *Big Brother* as a means of addressing the study of colloquial register in German and Spanish. Drawing on the conceptualization of register as a continuum (Briz Gómez 2010), in the following pages we examine an unpublished bilingual corpus consisting of conversations in daily routine contexts. The analysis of the data reveals that the situational features are highly colloquial in the interactions studied, and shows a specific display of the following parameters: control on language production, lexical in/accuracy, deixis, un/familiar treatment, syntax, extra/linguistic contextualization and tone. In conclusion, this qualitative study sheds light on the language used in conversations in reality television and lays the foundation to consider *Big Brother* an adequate corpus for analyzing colloquial register in both languages.

**Keywords:** Big Brother; Colloquial Register; Colloquializing Features; Situational Variation; Reality Television.

### [es] *Gran Hermano* Alemania y España: una caracterización lingüística desde la teoría del registro

**Resumen.** El objetivo de este estudio es justificar la idoneidad de *Gran Hermano* como medio para el análisis del registro coloquial en alemán y español. Partiendo de la concepción del registro como un continuo (Briz Gómez 2010), en las siguientes páginas examinamos un corpus bilingüe inédito compuesto por conversaciones en contextos cotidianos. El análisis de los datos revela que los rasgos situacionales son altamente coloquiales en las interacciones seleccionadas, lo que se refleja en una disposición concreta de los siguientes parámetros: control lingüístico sobre lo producido, léxico (im)preciso, deixis, tratamiento (no) familiar, sintaxis, contextualización (extra)lingüística y tono. En resumen, esta investigación de tipo cualitativo arroja luz sobre el lenguaje empleado en la conversación en contextos de telerrealidad y sienta las bases para considerar *Gran Hermano* un corpus adecuado para el análisis del registro coloquial en ambas lenguas.

**Palabras clave:** Gran Hermano; registro coloquial; rasgos coloquializadores; variación situacional; telerrealidad.

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**Index.** 1. Introduction. 2. Reality TV and *Big Brother*. 3. The register as a continuum. 4. Corpus and methodology. 5. Colloquializing features in daily routine. 6. Linguistic characterization of daily routine. 7. Conclusion.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the establishment of television during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the informative and entertaining medium par excellence and the continuous appearance of new TV formats, many linguists have recognized the enormous potential of their use in corpus linguistics, especially in compiling highly interactive, spoken corpora.<sup>3</sup> Regarding reality television (henceforth, RTV), researchers have mostly concentrated on its characterization as an audio-visual, cultural and sociological phenomenon, but less in linguistic terms (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich / Lorenzo-Dus 2013: 10). Especially relevant is the case of *Big Brother* (first broadcast in the Netherlands in 1999), the reality show that has had the greatest impact on television thus far.

Much has been said about the low moral quality of this reality show and the participants' loss of privacy,<sup>4</sup> which has generally been cited as a reason for its unsuitability as a valid corpus for linguistic research. Hence, it is necessary to distinguish this “bleak prospect from the point of view of the contents' quality” from the “promising [prospects] for the conversation analysts to easily obtain [...] highly immediate interactions” (López Serena 2014: 49; the translation is ours). The *Big Brother* contestants' psychological profile and the consumption habits of the audience have been tackled in Hill (2004), while the authenticity of the show's interaction has been addressed in Mathijs / Jones (2004). On the purely linguistic side, Sinkeviciute (2016) devotes her analysis to the study of jocularity and im/politeness in British and Australian cultural contexts; Sonderegger / Bane / Graff (2017) examine medium-term accent dynamics throughout the show, and Gutiérrez Rubio (2018) takes the TV program as a data source to study phraseology in Czech. Besides, the research on oral interaction has benefited from *Big Brother* since 2000 to document certain phenomena of spoken German.<sup>5</sup> However, there is still a lack of studies focusing on the language of the TV show not as a linguistic tool, but as a product itself. It is therefore our aim to carry out a qualitative analysis of everyday conversations in *Big Brother* Germany and Spain to determine whether it is a valid corpus to study colloquial register in both languages or not.

In this regard, we will first tackle RTV by describing its general characteristics and then *Big Brother* in particular (§2). We will continue delimiting register and diaphasic variation by means of the model of scales proposed in Briz Gómez

<sup>3</sup> Cf., among others, López Serena (2006 or 2009), where the author proves the lack of differences between “natural” and reality conversations regarding syntax.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the “Big Brother panic” in Biltreyest (2004).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Auer (2002), several contributions in Günthner / Bückler (2009) or Günthner / Hopper (2010), among others.

(2010) and Briz Gómez / Albelda Marco (2013), according to which situations are to be located within a continuum with both a colloquial and a formal pole (§3). After explaining the corpus upon which this study is based and the methodology applied (§4), we will then characterize the colloquializing features observed in daily routine conversations (§5) and describe them linguistically through the observation of seven key aspects: control on language production, lexical accuracy, deixis, un/familiar treatment, syntax, extra/linguistic contextualization and tone (§6). Finally, we will recapitulate the most relevant contributions in form of a conclusion (§7).

## 2. Reality TV and *Big Brother*

Even though RTV dates back to the America of the 1940s, scholarly attention towards RTV is rather recent (Lorenzo-Dus / Garcés-Conejos 2013: 9). Many researchers have examined its impact from interdisciplinary perspectives, such as sociology, cultural and media studies,<sup>6</sup> and less from a linguistic point of view (some exceptions are Lorenzo-Dus 2005, Bousfield 2008 or Sinkeviciute 2016). These studies are mainly devoted to the analysis of identity, approached from different frameworks such as critical discourse analysis or multimodality, or aggression, seen from broadcast talk and/or linguistic im/politeness (Lorenzo-Dus / Garcés-Conejos 2013: 24). Moreover, the previously mentioned references on spoken German have used interactions in *Big Brother* to delve into detailed linguistic phenomena, like hypotactic constructions (Auer 2002), quotative structures with *Motto* (Bücker 2009) or the analysis of pseudoclefts in English and German (Günthner / Hopper 2010).

The concept of RTV itself has changed over the years (Holmes / Jermyn 2004: 3). Some authors like Cebrián Herreros (1998: 495) defend the use of “talk show” as a hypernym that includes reality shows, debates and other TV formats whose main function is to entertain. Others prefer to restrict “reality show” to only those programs like *Big Brother* or *Survivor*, where participants live together in a confined space (Collins 2009) and see themselves in the situation of using similar colloquializing strategies. In any case, the fact is that one can find a series of varied shows that could be grouped together, but rely on different themes: survival in *Fire Island*, talent shows in *The X Factor* or *Operación Triunfo*, health makeovers in *Honey We’re Killing the Kids*, or dating programs in *First Dates*. Taking Ezpeleta / Gamero’s (2004: 151) terminology as a departing point, as well as Uclés Ramada’s (2017) contribution, *Big Brother* could be considered in this sense as a *subgenre* of RTV.

All these productions seem to share a number of characteristics, which define RTV as an audio-visual genre (Penzhorn / Pitout 2007). These are a) the focus on ordinary people, b) voyeurism, c) audience participation and d) the attempt to simulate real life. Later on, Schmidt (2015: 3) agrees with parameter d), but provides four more defining features: a’) the presence of strong aesthetic and dramatic components, b’) the lack of actors and scripts, c’) the made-for-TV-factual and d’)

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bonner (2003), Hill (2005) and Kraszewski (2017); for a review cf. Collins (2009).

the primary entertaining function. Moreover, the hybridity of this genre (Imbert 2003: 46; Briz Gómez 2013) cannot be ignored, as it is influenced by the documentary in its recording and broadcasting methods, by TV debates and interviews in its increasingly intimate content, by game shows in its challenges and settings, and by soap operas in its emotional and dramatized narration of facts (Göttlich *et al.* 2002: 7).

Especially relevant is Schmidt's contribution (2015: 5-9), which is an accurate overview of the communicative constellations in this genre that distinguishes between RTV as a product and as a production. In the first case, "natural" speech is staged or dramatized by means of a) the personal and corporal anchoring through non-fictional people and b) spontaneity, which can be achieved either by practicing the expression of already-scripted dialogues or (as in the case of *Big Brother*) by allowing non-scripted conversations to appear in arranged situations. This is what López Serena (2014: 39) calls "extensive immediatization",<sup>7</sup> i.e. the alteration of the environment and the production conditions but not of the linguistic forms to be employed (*ibid.*: 61). This procedure favors the emergence of typical phenomena of "natural" conversations,<sup>8</sup> as Schmidt (2015: 6) briefly illustrates by mentioning the free turn-takings, overlaps, abrupt utterances, etc. Conversely, the vision of RTV as a process can, in turn, be explained as a consequence of either deliberately causing events (when actions "suddenly" occur) or the depiction itself of the events (since situations are modified in the postproduction phase) (Schmidt 2015: 7). The latter does not materialize in our corpus, as recordings are taken from the 24/7 channel and not from the daily postproduced summaries.

As can be deduced thereof, much effort has been dedicated to outline the (audio-visual) conditions on which RTV relies, as well as the authenticity of its discourse. As pointed out by some authors, orality in TV has even become "strategically colloquial" (Briz Gómez 2013) and tries to "simulate reality" (López Serena 2014) in the sense that "an effect of extradiegetic communicative immediacy is sought, i.e. approaching the spectator" (2014: 61; the translation is ours). Nevertheless, the concrete linguistic features that let us observe whether *Big Brother's* daily interactions (at least in German and Spanish) are appropriate for the study of colloquial register have not been analyzed up until this point, so it is our goal to address it following Briz Gómez's model (2010) in the following sections.

### 3. The register as a continuum

Regarding the study of register (or diaphasic variation), it has traditionally been addressed by the criteria of field, tenor and mode (Halliday *et al.* 1964; Gregory / Carroll 1978), which give an idea of the linguistic choices speakers make depending on the situation. More recent approaches view this phenomenon as a continuum with two poles: a formal one and a colloquial or informal one. Among the models based on this conceptualization (such as Gregory / Carroll 1978 or Koch / Oester-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. also Kloss (1978).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Schwitalla (2006 [1997]).

reicher 1990), we follow the model below, published in Briz Gómez (2010) and developed in Briz Gómez / Albelda Marco (2013: 294).

Table. 1. Scales of situational variation (Briz Gómez / Albelda Marco 2013: 294; the translation is ours).

< -----		----- >	
colloquial axis colloquial communicative constellation + communicative immediacy		formal axis formal communicative constellation - communicative immediacy	
+	-	-	+
prototypical colloquial	periphery colloquial	periphery formal	prototypical formal
Colloquializing features		Formal features	
+ egalitarian relationship	-/+	-/+	- egalitarian relationship
+ personal relationship	-/+	-/+	- personal relationship
+ everyday interaction framework	-/+	-/+	- everyday interaction framework
+ everyday topic	-/+	-/+	- everyday topic
Resulting typical features of colloquial register		Resulting typical features of formal register	
+ spontaneous planning	-/+	-/+	- spontaneous planning
+ interpersonal purpose	-/+	-/+	- interpersonal purpose
+ informal tone	-/+	-/+	- informal tone
Low control on language production (loss of sounds, vacillations, restartings...), extreme deixis, imprecise lexicon (pro-forms...), close or familiar treatment (familiar addressing terms, nicknames, less mitigation...), pragmatic word order, etc.		High control on language production (accurate pronunciation...), precise lexicon (technical at times), distant treatment (with <i>usted</i> , courtesy forms, more mitigation...), syntactic word order, etc.	

As derived from Table 1, *colloquial* and *formal* are degrees within the scale of situational variation. According to the model, both categories can be represented more prototypically or peripherally depending on the degree of display of the so-called situational features: the greater presence of colloquializing or formal features, the more prototypical colloquial or formal; the lesser presence, the more peripheral colloquial or formal (Briz Gómez 1995: 30-35)<sup>9</sup>. These features can be described thanks to four key factors (Briz Gómez 2010: 26)<sup>10</sup>:

1. the socio-functional relationship among speakers, which can be egalitarian or hierarchical;
2. the personal relationship, understood in terms of shared knowledge and experiences;

<sup>9</sup> Even though it would be very enriching to combine qualitative and quantitative techniques to measure this (see, for example, the proposal of Gnisci / Bakemanand / Quera 2008), we will leave it for further research and concentrate here just on the qualitative approach.

<sup>10</sup> Some authors have claimed the convenience to look deeply into the nature of these four factors and update them if necessary (cf. García Ramón 2018, where the researcher declares that the functional aspect of a relationship always plays in interaction a more decisive role than the social one; in other words, that the latter is subordinate to the former).

3. the familiar or foreign interaction framework with respect to actions and spaces;
4. the interaction topic, which can correspond to everyday life or a specialized field.

The higher or lower dominance of the aforementioned features also affects the spontaneity in planning the discourse, the interpersonal purpose in the conversation and the in/formal tone, which can be understood as a consequence of the following linguistic phenomena: the control on language production, (extreme) deixis, im/precise lexicon, close or distant treatment, a specific syntactic word order, etc. In this sense, prototypical face-to-face conversations, as an immediate, dialogical, cooperative and dynamic genre subject to feedback (Briz Gómez 1995: 27-30), should score extremely left in the continuum indicated in Table 1, yet the specific linguistic realizations can vary when applied to RTV (cf. §5 and §6).

#### 4. Corpus and methodology

In order to analyze the suitability of using *Big Brother* to study colloquial register in German and Spanish, we base this study on two international versions of the show: *Gran Hermano 17* (2016) in Spain and *Big Brother 12* (2015) in Germany. The conversations taken into consideration are thus part of a bilingual corpus in progress derived from the live broadcasts on the respective 24/7 channels. Both of them represent some of the most recent seasons in their respective countries with anonymous contestants, unlike those seasons with participants who appear regularly on TV. *Big Brother* is a reality show where a group of strangers live together in a house for a maximum of three months to compete for the final prize. During their stay, contestants chat with each other, get involved in everyday activities and chores or face challenges from the Big Brother, who is not present but guides the activities in the house.

As pointed out by Aladro (2000: 291),<sup>11</sup> the competitiveness in the house is forced by the producers behind the show, as contestants are required to leave the house one after another on a weekly basis. The incapability to communicate with the outside, as well as the rationing of money, food or even water, increases the tension and aggressiveness within the house. That is why this show is not about a *represented* reality, as in a film, but about a *fabricated* reality (Charaudeau 1997). Due to the process of fabrication, which is designed to minimize the distance between life inside and outside the house and simultaneously maximize the viewership numbers,<sup>12</sup> some authors such as Centrorrino (2004: 162) recognize in *Big Brother* four main activities types: *daily routine*, *game*, *tension* and *obscenity*.

From the four different activities mentioned, the emissions considered here correspond exclusively to daily routine scenes, the most common in non-audio-visual conversations and, therefore, the most interesting for us. The data consist of approximately 15000 words and are situated in the final phase of the show

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Corner (2002).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Brenes Peña (2011).

(weeks 11 and 12), when the relationship among participants is very close. We cannot claim the corpus to be representative as the word amount is certainly limited and only a few dozen of people are analyzed. However, it is a sufficient size to justify the aim of this article and it has the advantage of being highly homogeneous and comparable in both languages. In particular, the research concentrates just on two types of daily routine, household interactions, i.e. cooking and cleaning. Unlike other activities, such as games, the participants in our scenes are free to act without having to follow any externally given roles. Therefore, the analysis conducted in sections §5 and §6 will be approached through the situational variation model of Briz Gómez (2010; cf. Table 1). The transcription symbols used are taken and adapted from those proposed by the Val.Es.Co. group (Briz Gómez / Grupo Val.Es.Co. 2002: 28-38; cf. Appendix).

## 5. Colloquializing features in daily routine

After explaining the data, it is time to position the situational parameters within the continuum of Table 1. If we pay attention to the colloquializing features of *Big Brother*'s daily routine conversations, we can locate them in the maximum level of the continuum in the period of time studied (Table 2).<sup>13</sup> It cannot be forgotten that the concepts dealt with here (Tables 1 and 2) are not static, but dynamic, so the values attributed to the parameters at issue correspond to the so-called general interactive context (CIG, from the acronym in Spanish<sup>14</sup>). At the same time, formal genres can also exhibit more colloquial moments and colloquial genres can also become more formal at certain points, especially in conversation. These are the concrete interactive contexts (CIC, from the acronym in Spanish; *ibid.*).

Table. 2. Colloquializing features in daily routine (D) (final phase).

	--	-	+	++
Egalitarian relationship				D
Personal relationship				D
Everyday interaction framework				D
Everyday topic				D

Unlike in other moments of the show (like games or the dialogues with the Big Brother), the relationship among speakers during household chores is egalitarian. Even though contestants may have built up a more or less well-known hierarchy according to their abilities and interactional practices (see, for instance, those who stand out for their cooking skills), all of them have in the CIG the same rights to take the floor and act following their needs and wishes. After

<sup>13</sup> It is essential to remember that Table 2 and 3 are just a graphic representation of features observed not from a quantitative, but from a qualitative point of view, so the decision to place the parameters rather left or right corresponds to the author's interpretation in line with previous similar researches (López Serena 2009, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Briz Gómez / Albelda Marco (2013: 300).

more than two months of co-living in a confined place, the personal relationship's degree is extremely high, since they share the same knowledge concerning the reality show and have been together through highly emotional experiences (confrontations, gossiping, intimate approaches, etc.). This does not clash with the fact that interpersonal bonds vary in intensity and shape depending on the participants at issue. The interactional framework quickly becomes familiar to the house inhabitants as the fabricated rooms (with sofas, beds, a kitchen, bedrooms and so on) strongly resemble those of an ordinary apartment. Finally, the conversation themes are devoted to everyday topics that one could recognize in many discussions in "naturally occurring" environments, such as whether to use oven or not, the taste of rice or the convenience to clean the living room. Thus, it can be argued that RTV conversations in daily routine contexts are highly colloquial or informal when it comes to the colloquializing features.<sup>15</sup>

At this point, it should not be forgotten that the living conditions within the *Big Brother* house, which favor the emergence of conflict (Guerra Bernal 2006; cf. §2), can affect contestants' (linguistic) behavior. However, these confrontational scenes are part of the *tension* group (cf. §4), which do have an impact on the interpersonal relations along the show, but exceed the limits of our aim. Furthermore, we also share the extended assumption that, after the first weeks in the house, participants are barely aware that they are being filmed (O' Leary 2003: 10 *apud* Hill 2004: 34f.; Sinkeviciute 2016: 69). Finally, the linguistic features belonging to the lower part of Table 1 are graphically represented in Table 3, which illustrates the continuum from the non-compliance of the parameter (-- or -) to its compliance to the highest extent (+ or ++).

## 6. Linguistic characterization of daily routine

Regarding the specific linguistic realizations corresponding to the aforementioned colloquializing features, their position within the variational scales can be organized in both languages as follows. The parametric representation in Table 3 is based on the visualization method adopted in López Serena (2009: 421; 2014: 51), who graphically compares the values of TV and "natural" conversations. As we can see (cf. footnote 5), most of the parameters are situated in the right part of the table with the exception of the linguistic contextualization:

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<sup>15</sup> Due to the spatial and temporal conditions of this television format, the show constitutes a microdiachrony as presented by Estellés Arguedas (2011) (cf. also Pons Bordería 2014) but reduced to a three months' period. Hence, the feature having a greater influence on the situational colloquialization in *Big Brother* would correspond to the degree of personal relationship or shared experiences, which may vary, in our opinion, if we compare the initial, intermediate and final phases of the show. Nonetheless, the analysis and empirical justification of this developmental change will need to be tackled in future research.



Table 3. Linguistic features of conversation in German and Spanish daily routines (DR).

		--	-	+	++
a)	Low control on language production			DR	
b)	Lexical inaccuracy				DR
c)	Extreme deixis			DR	
d)	Close or familiar treatment				DR
e)	Parceled syntax			DR	
f)	Linguistic contextualization		DR		
g)	Informal tone				DR

To offer a deep understanding of factors a) to g) —and verify the suitability of using *Big Brother* as a source to investigate colloquial register in German and Spanish—, we will examine them by drawing on some examples of daily routine in its CIG (Briz Gómez / Albelda Marco 2013; cf. *supra* §5) in Spanish and German. Due to space limitations, we will leave out the representation of CIC (cf. §5.), which can also appear in certain circumstances in the corpus. Besides that, it ought to be highlighted that some parameters can overlap or partially coincide with others, as we will subsequently show.

a) *Control on language production*

The low control on language production can be observed in our data through different typical phenomena in spoken language, some affecting the syntactic level (cf. also subsection §6e below) and other the phonological one. In the first case, consider restartings or false starts at the beginning of a segment, interruptions, self-repairs<sup>16</sup> or repairs affecting part of or the whole utterance; in this sense, cf. also Auer's (2000) concept of *Retraktion* in his so-called “on line-Syntax.”<sup>17</sup>

- (1) Rodrigo 01 *sí/ no pue[do (comer)]*  
‘yes/ I can’t eat it’
- Alain 02 *[¿y las ostr-] las otras?*  
‘and the other ones?’
- Rodrigo 03 *las judías verdes→// me pasa eso↓// no puedo to-/ no puedo→/// tomarlo// tomarlas*  
‘green beans// that happens to me// I can’t/// eat it// eat them’
- Clara 04 *por eso estaban en laa- en la casita ahí yaa→/ [tíasas ¿no?]*  
‘that’s why they were in the small house there already/ rigid isn’t it?’

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Pfeiffer (2010) in German.

<sup>17</sup> What is more, the concept of “repair” can exceed the utterance level and apply to the discursive level. As a result, conversational repair can be used to substitute, complete or modulate what was previously said by the speaker or hearer. Such is the case in Brinton *et al.*'s (1986) early study, where repair strategies to others were analyzed over the course of subsequent turns.

- Rodrigo 05 [*efectiva-/efectivamente*  
‘indeed’
- (2) Thomas 01 *hä/ ohne scheiss*↓/ *hätte niemals g- hätte NIEMALS gedacht*→//  
*dass ne do-/ aus ner DOse ne suppe schmeckt*↓  
‘hey/ no shit/ I would have never imagined// that a canned soup  
would taste good’

In (1), where Rodrigo explains that he cannot stand green beans, speakers vacillate and restart their interventions in several instances, either by repeating a noun phrase (02, 04) or just a word (05). This process of building an utterance can imply a vowel lengthening, like *laa-* in (04) and contributes to keeping the turn and gaining time to think. The same happens in German (cf. example (2)) as Thomas and Guido are eating a canned soup and the former is surprised by its taste. The unexpected feeling is mirrored here in the uncontrolled restarting *hätte niemals g- hätte NIEMALS gedacht*. Thus, most of the self-repairs shown in (1) and (2) take place before the word production comes to an end with the exception of Rodrigo (03), who, after a half a second pause, changes *tomarlo* (‘eat it’) to *tomarlas* (‘eat them’) to make the verb agree in gender and number with the noun<sup>18</sup>. The low level of control on language production justifies the emergence of Blanche-Benveniste’s (1998) figures (cf. §6e). The author offers a complementary syntactic vision through the graphic representation with cells of structures embodying an interruption in the speech chain.<sup>19</sup> The self-repair in (2), for example, would be associated with a figure of scale.

From a phonological point of view, the aforementioned low control stands out in cases of vowel and consonant lengthenings, vacillations and loss of sounds. In fact, the indefinite articles in (2) constantly lose their initial sounds and transform into *ne* (‘eine’) or *ner* (‘einer’), a typical phenomenon in colloquial German (Schwitalla 2006 [1997]: 38). Interestingly enough, the sound loss seems to concentrate in Spanish not on the first, but on intermediate and last word syllables, like *pa* for “para”, *to* for “todos” or *toa* for “todas” (cf. example (8) below). Likewise, the intervowel and final /d/ elision is wide spread in Peninsular Spanish in central and southern diathopic varieties, as well as in certain speech communities (diastratic variation) and communicative situations (diaphasic variation).<sup>20</sup>

### b) *Lexical accuracy*

The rather inaccurate lexis employed in the daily interactions studied can be best perceived in the use of non-specialized vocabulary, vague formulations and onomatopoeic expressions.

- (3) Miguel 01 *¿alguien va a desayunar más?/ porque e-sstáis todo el rato/ pum*↑  
*pum*↓ *pum*↑ *pum*↓

<sup>18</sup> For further cases, see examples (8), (10) or (11) below.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. also López Serena (2009, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Labov (1966) and Narbona *et al.* (1998), among others.

- ‘is someone else going to have breakfast?/ because you are all the time/ pomp pomp pomp’
- Meritxell 02 *noo/ eso lo (( )) que fregaban/ (( ))// este vaso↑ cuando loo de eso↑ lo friego yo [(( )]*  
 ‘no/ that thing (( )) that washed (( ))// I’ll wash this cup when about that thing (( )’
- (4) Bianca 01 *so/ habn wir net↓/ (ein) KÜchendings habn wa nicht mehr gehabt?/ ne/ küchenpapier?*  
 ‘so/ we don’t have/ didn’t we still have a kitchen thing?/ no/ kitchen towel?’
- Maria 02 *hm*  
 ‘hm’

While washing the dishes, Miguel complains in (3) about their housemates leaving the dirty cups in the kitchen. Instead of verbalizing his complaint through verbs or adverbs, he substitutes it for the onomatopoeic, rising and falling *pum* (01). Its repetition with alternating intonation simulates the sound of the cup touching the kitchen countertop and indicates reiteration of the action. As a result, Meritxell reacts to the previous intervention but avoids giving a specific moment to wash the cup. Even if more or less ritualized expressions could have been employed, such as “when I have time” or “when I finish”, she utilizes *cuando loo de eso*, which does not actually give an account of when will it be. The German also draws on lexical vagueness in equivalent situations. In fragment (4) this is illustrated by the abstract and diffuse *KÜchendings* (literally, ‘the kitchen thing’), which could apply virtually to any object in the room. In fact, due to the highly fuzzy expression chosen, the speaker repairs herself and specifies that it is kitchen towels that she is asking about. Other related tokens in the corpora can be observed in *PORFAA* (7), a shortening of *por favor* (‘please’), or *UND SO* (9). In this regard, the functioning of *so* as a so-called *Satzpartikel* (Métrich / Faucher 2009: 816) —and *und so* as a fixed construction (*ibid.*: 817f.)— specializes in identifying a segment or utterance as imprecise, inaccurate and not to be taken literally.

### c) *Extreme deixis*

There is great number of research devoted to the analysis of deixis in oral discourse (see, for instance, Ahrenholz 2007 or Ulloa Casaña 2019, just to mention some recent contributions), and it could be argued that the most faithful approach would not only include the information expressed verbally, but also paraverbal and non-verbal data.<sup>21</sup> According to Table 1, highly colloquial conversations display an extreme deixis with a strong referencing to the speakers’ *ego-hic-et-nunc*, usually accompanied by anaphoric and cataphoric linkings. Hence, in comparison to more formal and less immediate text types, an external reader may struggle to understand, for example, the references provided in (6), where the house inhabitants are having lunch seated around the table:

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Stukenbrock’s multimodal proposal in 2015.

- (5) Rodrigo 01 *¿no quieres más patata?*  
 ‘don’t you want more potatoes?’
- Noelia 02 *ahora cojo dos o tres (6'') estas pa tí↑ y estas pa mí↓ ¿vale?*  
 ‘I’ll take now a couple or three (6'') these for you and these for me okay?’
- (...)
- Rodrigo 03 *coge de aquí/ alain→<sup>22</sup>*  
 ‘take from here/ alain’
- Alain 04 *¿a ver?/ yo me he puesto los trocitos duros estos↓ (4,5'') a ver→ (3'') estee↑*  
 ‘let me see?/ I took these hard small slices here (4,5'') let’s see (3'') this one’

As can be observed, the fragment is full of deictica that anchor the action to the situational *origo*. The personal anchoring is transmitted by means of verbs in the first (‘cojo’ (02)) or the second person singular (‘quieres’ (01)), the subject pronoun *yo* (04) or the prepositional pronouns *mí/ti* (02). As regards the spatial referent (the potatoes), it is pointed out in terms of the numerals *dos o tres* (02) and the demonstratives *estas* (02), which Noelia will take in an immediate future (‘ahora’ (02)). The spatial deictics *estos* and *estee* (04) change quickly to designate the octopus slices, the new referent lying *aquí* (03). The German example (6) also shows a vivid use of spatial referencing, in this case when talking about apples. Firstly, they are generally referred to as *das* (01), then retaken through the article *DIE* (03) in an accentuated manner, and finally repeated as *sie* (04). Following *DIE* there is the spatial attribute *von rewe* (03), that specifies the origin of the fruit. Additionally, the reference to the *jetzt* (01) of the action increases the temporal anchoring and consequently the extreme deixis mentioned in Table 1. Although a quantitative analysis would be required to measure the extent to which deixis changes from highly colloquial to more formal conversations, the corpora worked with here give an idea of their extreme use in German and Spanish.

- (6) Bianca 01 *was SIND denn [(da)s jetzt fü]=*  
 ‘what kind of apples are?’
- Sharon 02 *[ja ja]*  
 ‘yes yes’
- Bianca 03 *=r äpfel?→/ auch DIE von rewe?*  
 ‘these?/ those from rewe too?’
- (...)
- Maria 04 *auch schon gedacht/ sie sind- sie sind voll gut*  
 ‘that’s also what I thought/ they are really good’

<sup>22</sup> Rodrigo moves his glance from Noelia to Alain and accompanies the order with a hand movement.

d) *Familiar treatment*

The treatment between show contestants is very close or familiar in both languages in the temporal phase analyzed, which can be extracted from the way they address each other in different contexts, i.e. in the use of vocatives, pronouns and (jocular) qualifiers. As a rule, the formal addressing terms *usted* and *Sie*, usually considered as polite in the Spanish and German cultures respectively, are not present throughout the interactions analyzed. Instead, the second person singular is used (see (10)) and not seldom combined with verbs in imperative, as in (7).<sup>23</sup>

- (7) Noelia 01 *BEA/ CIÉRRALA PORFAA/// que está ahí*  
‘Bea/ close it please/// it’s just there’
- (8) Bea 01 *yo me compraba una vaca↑ solo pa ordeñarla to los días y beberme toa su leche↓*  
‘I would buy a cow just to milk it every day and drink all the milk’  
Miguel 02 *pues tienes-/ me tienes a MÍ cariño↓*  
‘you have me then sweetheart’
- (9) Maria 01 *DEIN KETCHUP UND SO SCHATZI?↑/ WEG?*  
‘your ketchup and stuff darling/ finished?’
- (10) Lusy 01 *du könntest den zweiten topf einfach schnell WAssern-↑ abwer- w- WAschen↑ und UMFülln↓*  
‘you could just wash the second pot and pour it’  
Natascha 02 *hm\_hm*  
‘hm\_hm’  
Lusy 03 *ja mama (1,5") (o)ke?*  
‘yes mum (1,5”) okay?’
- (11) Sharon 01 *jaa// wie MORDor*  
‘yeaah// like Mordor’  
Chris 02 *wie in mordor du↓/ bei s- sauron↓*  
‘like in Mordor you/ at Saurons’  
Sharon 03 *(LACHEN)// du ork (3'') (LACHEN)/ thomas ist (norwen)*  
‘(LAUGHTER)// you orc (3'') (LAUGHTER)/ thomas is Norwen’

The house inhabitants also draw on nicknames or hypocorisms in daily situations; for instance, when asking to close the door (7), where *Bea* stands for *Beatriz*. The use of affectionate names, like *cariño* (8), seems common in jocular comments, and so does *SCHATZI* (9) after expressing a request of information.<sup>24</sup> One could argue that both vocatives assume a strategic function oriented to not misunderstand

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bertomeu Pi (2019).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Bertomeu Pi (2019).

the joke in the former and to succeed in the request in the latter by strengthening the close, interpersonal bonds and solidarity existing between both speakers (*ibid.*). In (10), the vocative *mama* acquires a rather ironic and disapproving nuance since Lusy pretends to assume the role of the mother, whose daughter ignores the piece of advice she has been given ('hm\_hm'). Vocatives implying a close interpersonal relationship, such as *alter* in German, are prone to accompany reprimands too (cf. example (19) below), following a similar purpose to the aforementioned in regard to affectionate names (8, 9). Additionally, not only positive connoted expressions manage to demonstrate familiar treatment. As a matter of fact, Sharon compares Chris in (11) to an orc (well known for their ugliness and silliness) amidst laughter, which proves the lack of impediments of using negative qualifiers in jocular contexts.

e) *Parceled syntax*

With regard to syntax, the observation of German and Spanish face-to-face interactions confirms the existence of a colloquial, parceled syntax, which differs from the mostly written based, traditional one (Narbona Jiménez 1991: 203, Auer 1998: 285). Contrary to the partly spread assumption that colloquial conversation privileges the use of parataxis over hypotaxis,<sup>25</sup> empirical statistical studies in Spanish have shown that simple sentences are quantitatively superior to the compound ones, and that hypotaxis is more likely to appear within compound sentences than parataxis (Hesselbach 2014: 99). The presence of “abhängige Hauptsätze” (Auer 1998: 284) or “uneingeleitete Nebensätze” (Imo 2007: 46) in spoken German makes it also necessary to determine the role played by coordination and subordination in everyday conversations, which we will undertake elsewhere.

Moreover, in line with the low control mentioned in §6a, it also seems — generally speaking — that interlocutors in the corpus sometimes add information as it comes to their minds (Narbona Jiménez 1989: 180), which makes words act accumulatively and appear in a parceled manner (Briz Gómez 1998: 69-70). This statement is endorsed by the recognition of several syntactic phenomena, such as *Retraktion* and *Projektion* (Auer 2000) and the so-called *increments*, *unit expansions* (Auer 2007) or *turn continuations* (Imo 2011), and the concepts of *online Syntax* (Auer 2000) or *syntaktische Diskontinuität* (Schwitalla 2006 [1997]). A visual way to represent the variety of constructions showing syntactic discontinuity in the phase and aspects reflected in Tables 2 and 3 is Blanche-Benveniste's analysis *en grilles* (Blanche-Benveniste 1985: 1998<sup>26</sup>), which recognizes four syntactic figures: symmetry, enumeration, parenthesis and scale (López Serena 2009: 415). In addition to some of the features previously mentioned in the article, examples (12) to (19) below illustrate these typically colloquial syntactic structures, characterized for the irruption of the paradigmatic in the syntagmatic axis (*ibid.*: 412).

- (12) Noelia      01    *yo lo dije el otro día/ que cada/ uno/ se friege/ su vaso\ / que cada/ uno/ se friege suu tenedor\ / su cuchillo y (eso)\ / luego ya [...]*

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Tagliavini (1999) for romance languages.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. also López Serena (2009).

‘I said it the other day/ each of us should wash his glass/ each of us should wash his fork/ his knife and stuff/ afterwards [...]’

Table. 4. Figure of symmetry in Spanish.

que	cada	uno	se	friegue	su	vaso
que	cada	uno	se	friegue	suu	tenedor

- (13) Chris 01 [...] *bestimmt eine sTUNde* oder so was→  
 ‘[...] an hour or so for sure’  
 Sharon 02 *WAS?*  
 ‘what?’  
 Chris 03 *jaa (2,5'') hm→/// bestimmt nen stündchen*  
 ‘yeah (2,5'') hm/// about an hour for sure’

Table. 5. Figure of symmetry in German.

bestimmt	eine	sTUNde	oder	so	was
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
bestimmt	nen	stündchen			

- (14) Noelia 01 *perooo→/ tú lo que no puedes hacer es comerteee→ (1,5'') nueve-/ nueveee tenedores→// nueve cuchillos→// nueveee*  
 ‘but/ what you can’t do is washing (1,5'') nine/ nine forks// nine knives// nine’

Table. 6. Figure of enumeration in Spanish.

tú	lo	que	no	puedes	es	comerteee	nueve-	
							nueveee	tenedores
							nueve	cuchillos
							nueveee	

- (15) Chris 01 [...] *aus dem GRUND ääh→/ mach ich heut noch ein bisschen was gesünderes↓/ geMÜSE→/ fleisch reis/ weißte?*  
 ‘[...] that’s why uuh/ today I’m cooking something a bit healthier/ vegetables/ meat rice/ you know?’

Table. 7. Figure of enumeration in German.

mach	ich	heut	noch	ein	bisschen	was	gesünderes	geMUSE
								fleisch
								reis

- (16) Miguel 01 *es que no- no salgo de aquí al final ¿eh?/ porque ahoraa→*  
 ‘in the end I just can’t get out of here hu?/ because now’

Table. 8. Figure of scale in Spanish.

es	que	no-						
		no	salgo	de	aquí	al	final	¿eh?

- (17) Maria 01 *auch schon gedacht/ sie sind- sie sind voll gut*  
 ‘that’s also what I thought/ they are really good’

Table. 9. Figure of scale in German.

auch	schon	gedacht	sie	sind		
			sie	sind	voll	gut

- (18) Noelia 01 *yyy mmm// ¿las ollas?/ pues cada uno↑/ un día↑/ que friegue las- una ollaaa→// ¿sabes?/ ¿sabes lo que te quiero decir?→// porque las ollas es común→/ o la cafeteeraa→ o algo así*  
 ‘and mmm// the pots? that each of us should wash a top one day// you know?/ do you know what I mean?// because pots belong to everybody/ or the coffee machine or something like that’

Table. 10. Figure of parenthesis in Spanish.

una	ollaaa							porque	las
		¿sabes?							
		¿sabes	lo	que	te	quiero	decir?		

- (19) Bianca 01 *booa/ alter (1,5‘‘) stellt so was nicht rein↓ (5,5‘‘) müsst ihr hier alle rein<sup>27</sup>↓ (11‘‘) (sag mal) wer STELLT denn so nen BRETTTER da rein?↓/ jetzt mal wirklich im ernst→ [...]*  
 ‘whoa/ man (1,5’’) don’t put such a thing in there (5,5’’) you all have to go in there (11’’) (tell me) who is putting such a board in there?/ I really mean it now [...]

Table. 11. Figure of parenthesis in German.

nicht	rein						sag	mal
		müsst	ihr	hier	alle	rein		

#### f) *Linguistic contextualization*

A linguistic contextualization of the events happening in daily routine conversations is usually not required since the information is easily inferable due to the high level of involvement with the action being pursued and the strong (extra-linguistic) anchor to the communicative situation. Evidence of this connection to the I-here-now is the deictic expressions in examples (5) or (6) and the fact that there is often an interaction with objects in the immediate environment, as in (7) or (9). Howev-

<sup>27</sup> During this segment between pauses, the speaker stops looking at her flatmates to put the boards in the dishwasher and then (“sag mal...”) turns again to continue with the framing utterance.



er, it should also be stated that the speakers' purposes can move in certain CIC (cf. §5) from a transactional to a rather interpersonal goal, as in storytellings. A small linguistic contextualization becomes more necessary in those cases.

g) *Informal tone*

Because of the compliance degree of parameters a) to f), the highly informal or colloquial tone in the situations studied can be inferred.

## 7. Conclusion

As can be deduced from all the diverse approaches that have tackled *Big Brother* and RTV, from cultural and media studies to sociology, psychology or linguistics, one can argue without doubt that this interdisciplinary phenomenon has deeply influenced the current state of many societies in recent years. In the specific case of *Big Brother*, the existing studies focusing on language have investigated, on the one hand, aggression in terms of im/politeness, either in different cultures (Sink-eviciute 2016) or in the interlinguistic contrast (Guerra Bernal 2006). On the other hand, others have used the program as a data source to illustrate and explain concrete aspects of spoken language, such as hypotaxis (Auer 2002) or fixed constructions (Bücker 2009). In order to concentrate on the *Big Brother*'s daily conversations themselves, as a product, from a qualitative point of view and claim whether it is or not an adequate material to analyze colloquial register in German and Spanish, we have resorted to a bilingual, comparable corpus based on cooking and cleaning interactions in *Gran Hermano 17* (2016) in Spain and *Big Brother 12* (2015) in Germany.

The analysis of the colloquializing features of Briz Gómez's (2010) situational scales model<sup>28</sup> shows that the interactive contexts studied, which correspond to the program's final phase (weeks 11 and 12), are highly colloquial both in German and Spanish: the relationship among participants is egalitarian and the personal relationship remarkably high; as regards the interaction framework, it is deeply familiar by the end of the show and the topics are completely quotidian (cf. Table 2). Regarding the linguistic characterization of conversations in daily routine, most of the situational parameters remain in the colloquial part of the register continuum (cf. Table 3) with the exception of contextualization, as linguistic explanations are generally not required. The control on language production is low in the corpus, as can be deduced from the numerous restartings, (self-)repairs, vacillations and loss of sounds. This spontaneity or lack of planning can also be observed in the use of inaccurate lexis, when non-specialized vocabulary, vague formulations and onomatopoeic expressions are used instead of more precise terms. Concerning extreme deixis, speakers are strongly anchored to the environmental I-here-now by means of pronouns, adverbs and morphological endings that serve the personal, spatial and temporal deixis. The treatment among participants is extremely close or familiar, as evidenced by the employment of (affective) nicknames and family-related

<sup>28</sup> Cf. also Briz Gómez / Albelda Marco (2013).

vocatives; what is more, this is not only the case in jocular moments (where negatively connoted terms may appear too), but also in sequences of irony and disagreement. A profound look into syntax demonstrates its parceled character, which becomes evident through the recognition of four typically colloquial syntactic figures: symmetry, enumeration, parenthesis and scale (Blanche-Benveniste 1985, López Serena 2009). Finally, the general tone is eminently informal or colloquial in the contexts studied. As a consequence thereof, it can be claimed without doubt that the accomplishment of the parameters considered as prototypically colloquial justifies the election of *Big Brother* as a highly suitable corpus to study colloquial register in German and Spanish.

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## Appendix

A	Intervention of an interlocutor identified as A.
=	Turn maintenance of an interlocutor in overlapping interventions.
[ ]	Overlapping talk.
[...]	Transcription's elision or interruption.
-	Restartings and "cut off" interventions without pause.
/	Pause shorter than half a second.
//	Pause between half a second and a second.
///	Pause of a second or longer.
(5'')	5 seconds' silence. The number of seconds in pauses longer than one second is indicated.
↑	Rising intonation.
→	Suspended intonation.
↓	Falling intonation.
PESADO	Marked or emphatic pronunciation.
pe sa do	Syllabled pronunciation.
(( ))	Indecipherable transcription.
(pesa)do	Questionable transcription of inaudible talk.
°( )°	Very low pronunciation, close to whispering.
(LAUGHTER)	Mark of laughter, coughs and other phenomena apart from utterances.
<i>pesado</i>	Expressed in reported speech.
aa	Vowel lengthening.
nn	Consonant lengthening.