Université Paris Cité
Discourse markers: Theories and methods

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Deverbal discourse markers
Properties and grammaticality

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1. Introduction

- Subset of discourse markers
- Constructions with procedural/instructional meaning
- Verb (mostly inflected) + one or more optional elements
- Mismatch: formally clauses/predications, structurally attributes
- Syntactically detached
- Positional freedom
- Oral and written language

1. Introduction

(1) hacía proselitismo entre los gitanos, siempre con prisa, *me imagino*, diciendo algo así como (Spanish, 1984, Alejandro Gándara, *La media distancia*, *CDH*)
     '[...] always in a hurry, *I imagine*, saying something [...]'

(2) c'est un peu comme les retraités dans un monastère que font les croyants, histoire, *j'imagine*, de se purifier. (French, 1999, Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *L'enfant des limbes*, *Frantext*)
     '[...] story, *I imagine*, to purify themselves [...]'

1. Introduction

- Contemporary and historical corpora of spoken and written French, Italian, Romanian and Spanish:
-- *Base textuelle Frantext (Frantext)*
-- *Biblioteca italiana (BIBIT)*
-- *Corpus computațional de referință pentru limba română contemporană (CoRoLa)*
-- *Corpus del Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato (LIP)*
-- *Corpus del Nuevo diccionario histórico del español (CDH)*
-- *Discours sur la ville. Corpus de français parlé parisien des années 2000 (CFPP2000)*
-- *Habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel culto (HUSNC)*

1. Introduction

- Research questions:
-- 1. Specific properties
-- 2. Grammaticality degree

2. Names

- Host of different names:
-- *Parenthetical verb* (Urmson 1952)
-- *Verbe d'opération* (Benveniste 1966 [1958])
-- *Comment clause* (Quirk et al. 1985)
-- *Reduced parenthetical clause* (Schneider 2007)
-- *Marqueur discursif propositionnel* (Andersen 2007)
-- *Deverbal discourse marker* (Company Company 2008)
-- *Verb-based pragmatic marker* (Ghezzi & Molinelli 2014a)
-- *Deverbal pragmatic marker* (Ghezzi & Molinelli 2014b)
-- *Marqueur deverbal* (Schneider 2020)
-- *Segnale discorsivo deverbale* (Schneider 2022)
- Lists of terms: Schneider (2007), Kaltenböck (2013)
- Lists of Romance deverbal discourse markers: Dostie (2004), Schneider (2007), Ghezzi & Molinelli (2014a)

2. Names

- Viewed/analyzed from various perspectives:
-- Detachment/parentheticality
-- Syntactic category
-- Prosody
-- Subjectivity
-- Epistemic stance
-- Word-formation
-- Discourse marker
- Evolution of perspective: verb → discourse marker

3. Meanings

- General meaning of discourse markers is procedural/ instructional, synsemantic, relational and indexical
-- Procedural/instructional: indicate how a specific referential meaning should be interpreted
-- Synsemantic: acquire their meaning in association with another meaning
-- Relational: establish a relation between the discourse marker and a target
-- Indexical: point to an explicit or implicit target

3. Meanings

- Target involves three different domains (Llopis Cardona 2014; Traugott 2018, 2022; Sansò 2020; Narrog & Heine 2021; Heine et al. 2021):
-- Relation between (parts of) utterances
-- Relation between speaker and utterance
-- Relation between speaker and hearer
- *Textual* (text-text), *personal* (speaker-text) and *interpersonal* (speaker-hearer) domain
- Deverbal discourse markers present in all three domains (Sansò 2020)

3. Meanings

-   Textual domain:

(3)   - ¿Cree que ha variado mucho el tipo de enseñanza actual
       de la antigua? *Vamos*, de la antigua, de la anterior *quiero
       decir*. (Spanish, 1983, C3H1, *HUSNC*)
       '[...] *let's go*, the old one, the previous one, *I mean*'
(4)   Soția dumneavoastră, copiii, au fost un sprijin să vă
       afirmați ca poet, sau om de literatură, *să spunem* la
       general? (Romanian, 2014, *Interviu cu scriitorul Mihai
       Leonte*, *CoRoLa*)
       '[...] to assert yourself as a poet, or man of literature, *let's
       say* in general?'

3. Meanings

- Personal domain: (1), (2) and (5):

(1) hacía proselitismo entre los gitanos, siempre con prisa, *me imagino*, diciendo algo así como (Spanish, 1984, Alejandro Gándara, *La media distancia*, *CDH*)
'[...] always in a hurry, *I imagine*, saying something [...]'

(2) c'est un peu comme les retraités dans un monastère que font les croyants, histoire, *j'imagine*, de se purifier. (French, 1999, Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *L'enfant des limbes*, *Frantext*)
'[...] story, *I imagine*, to purify themselves [...]'

(5) Cursurile propagandiștilor aveau *parcă* mai mare libertate. (Romanian, 2015, Mihai Leonte, *Planul Valev*, *CoRoLa*)
'the propagandists' courses *apparently* had more freedom'

3. Meanings

- Interpersonal domain:

(6) A: *senti* ti devo lasciare perché ho un collegamento *credo* da Roma grazie comunque di (Italian, 1990, MC9, *LIP*)
'*listen* I have to leave you because I have a connection *I think* from Rome [...]'

(7) Spk4: sur les habitudes de vie les courses et la cuisine que tu fais d'façon euh *tu vois* quotidienne (French, 2008, *Blanche Duchemin Reine Ceret*, *CFPP2000*)
'[...] that you do in a *you see* daily way'

3. Meanings

- Multifunctional (Bazzanella 1995, 2006):
-- As (abstract) construction, a deverbal discourse marker may function in different domains:
--- Fr. *disons*, It. *diciamo*, Rom. *să spunem* and Sp. *digamos*, all meaning 'let's say': textual domain, personal domain, possibly also interpersonal domain
-- As construct (= particular instance of a construction), a discourse marker may simultaneously function in more than one domain:
--- Utterance-final deverbal discourse markers: personal domain as mitigators, interpersonal domain as devices indicating the end of a turn

4. Specific properties

- Some properties are particularly clear in deverbal discourse markers
- Referential meaning vs. procedural/instructional meaning
- Depends on the *holoconstruction* (= construction and its context) and/or on the *meroconstruction* (= construction by itself) (Schneider 2023)

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4. Specific properties

- Procedural/instructional holoconstruction:

(1) hacía proselitismo entre los gitanos, siempre con prisa, *me imagino*, diciendo algo así como (Spanish, 1984, Alejandro Gándara, *La media distancia*, *CDH*)
'[...] always in a hurry, *I imagine*, saying something [...]'

- Referential holoconstruction:

(8) - *j'imagine* Clémenceau comme ça, quand il avait quarante ou quarante-cinq ans. (French, 1928, André Malraux, *Les Conquérants*, *Frantext*)
'*I imagine* Clémenceau like this [...]'

4. Specific properties

- Ambiguous holoconstruction:

(9)   nel leggere l'Opera suddetta rare volte apro il Dizzionario, il
       che mi succederà certo in altre opere, perchè *m'immagino*
       saranno più difficili. (Italian, 1822, Giacomo Leopardi,
       Epistolario, *BIBIT*)
       '[...] which will certainly happen to me in other works
       because *I imagine* they will be more difficult'

4. Specific properties

- Procedural/instructional meroconstruction:

(10) más sólida que produce el libro y que, *imagino yo*, fue lo
      que los autores buscaron en forma deliberada. (Spanish,
      1996, *Semana*, 3-10/12/1996, *CDH*)
      '[...] which *I imagine* was what the authors deliberately
      sought to achieve'

4. Specific properties

-   Syntactic detachment:

--   Not governed by host clause

--   Reduced governing capacity (e.g., personal pronouns)

--   Not coordinated

--   Expanded position options within the host clause

4. Specific properties

- Morphological and sequential fixation:
-- Specific morphological form and specific sequence
-- Paradigm of the source verb is not active
-- Single source verb may originate several deverbal
   discourse markers: Fr. *dire* 'say':
--- *disons* 'let's say'
--- *il faut dire* 'one must say'
--- *j'allais dire* 'I was gonna say'
--- *je dirais* 'I'd say'
--- *je veux dire* 'I want to say/I mean'
--- *on dirait* 'one would say'
--- *on va dire* 'one will/would say'

5. Grammaticality

- Lexicon and grammar constitute a continuum
- Specific grammaticality properties serve to define the grammaticality of a construction
- Each grammaticality property by itself constitutes a continuum
- None of the properties alone can define grammaticality
- Only association and joint presence of several properties

5. Grammaticality

- Deverbal discourse markers are not purely lexical items
- Grammaticality degree of discourse markers is incipient, partial and distant from the degree reached by affixes, clitics, articles and the like
- Question is not whether deverbal discourse markers are lexical or grammatical items
- Question is which grammaticality properties do they possess, to what degree and where should they be located in the continuum between lexicality and grammaticality

5. Grammaticality

- Diewald (2011), Boye & Harder (2012), Lehmann (2015 [1982]), Berrendonner (2023):
-- Procedural/instructional meaning
-- Paradigmaticity
-- Obligatoriness
-- Closed-class membership
-- Phonological reduction/univerbation
-- Boundness/fusion with contiguous element/affixation

5. Grammaticality

- Procedural/instructional meaning:
-- In general, deverbal discourse markers possess this property
-- Grammatical meaning restricted to basic conceptual domains (*grammatical categories*)
-- Gender, number, case, person, tense, aspect and so forth, and also mood/modality
-- "status of the proposition that describes the event" (Palmer 2001: 1)
-- Meaning of deverbal discourse markers concerns the status of propositions and thus is part of the semantic domain expressed by mood/modality

5. Grammaticality

- Paradigmaticity and obligatoriness:
-- Paradigms = "holistic semiotic structures, consisting of ordered bundles of oppositions between all marked and unmarked members of the category in question" (Diewald & Politt 2022: 2)
-- Language-internal obligatoriness and communicative obligatoriness (Diewald 2011)
-- Occurrence of deverbal discourse markers not due to language-internal obligatoriness
-- Communicative obligatoriness?
-- Do not constitute a tightly organized paradigm with obligatory options opposing each other

5. Grammaticality

- Closed-class membership:
-- No closed class as, for instance, grammatical affixes or clitics
-- Nevertheless their number is limited (Schneider 2007; Degand & Evers-Vermeul 2015)
-- In actual speech, only few items are employed
-- Adding new items to the class is a long and gradual process

5. Grammaticality

- Phonological reduction/univerbation:
-- Engl. *I dessey*, *lookee*, *y'know* (Heine et al. 2021)
-- Fr. (Québec) *tsé* 'you know' (Vincent, Votre & Laforest 1993)
-- Fr. (Québec) *coudon* 'listen' (Dostie 2004)
-- Ger. *glaub* 'I think', *mein* 'I deem' (Schwyzer 1939)
-- Lat. *sis* 'if you want', *sodes* 'if you dare' (Hofmann 1951)
-- Rom. *cică* 'it is said', *parcă* 'apparently' (Zafiu 2013)
-- Sic. *dicica* 'presumably', *parica* 'apparently', *penzica*/*penzuca* 'probably' (Cruschina 2010)
-- Sp. *dizque* 'supposedly' (Company Company 2006)

5. Grammaticality

- Boundness/fusion with contiguous element/affixation:
-- Syntactic detachment
-- Attachment to contiguous intonation units (Kärkkäinen 2003; Avanzi 2012; Dehé 2014)

6. Conclusion

- Same properties as all discourse markers
- Some properties are particularly evident in deverbal discourse markers:
-- Referential meaning vs. procedural/instructional meaning
-- Syntactic detachment
-- Morphological and sequential fixation

6. Conclusion

- Grammaticality degree of deverbal discourse markers is incipient/partial
- Display grammaticality properties that distinguish them from purely lexical items:
-- Procedural/instructional meaning
-- Restricted-class membership
-- Phonological reduction/univerbation
-- Attachment to contiguous intonation units
- But:
-- No paradigm
-- No closed class
-- No language-internal obligatoriness
-- No affixation

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