

Fill the gap: constituent-internal discourse markers in Italian L2

Poster presentation

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INTRO

With this poster we present our syntactic analysis of DMs occurring within the sentence in L2 Italian, and in Italian as L1.

METHODOLOGY

- Our database consisted of two corpora. For the L1 we used the online CLIPS corpus of spoken Italian; for the L2 we collected ourselves 4h of spoken dialogues between L2 speakers, using the Map Task technique. The Map Task consists of a game in which the participants have to collaborate to complete the route on a map (as shown in the images on the left of the poster). It is very interactive in nature and thus it is very useful for the elicitation of DMs.
- On the right of the poster we have an overview of the data: the graphs show that the most frequent DMs in sentence-internal position are *diciamo* and *praticamente* for the L1, while the form *veramente* is used in this position by L2 speakers only.

Our analysis will show that these forms reveal interesting aspects of L2 acquisition of discourse markers. A crucial point to keep in mind is that we considered exclusively the sentence internal DMs that are clearly prosodically integrated in the sentence, so they cannot be considered as parenthetical.

ANALYSIS

- As shown in the examples, in L1 Italian the verb-based DM *diciamo* in English “Let’s say” and the adverb-based DM *praticamente* ‘practically’ are used with a mitigating function. See examples (i), (ii) and (iii) from the CLIPS corpus.
- With this function, the speaker is expressing the degree of confidence he has on the proposition, and thus he expresses Epistemic modality in Cinque’s 1999 terms.
- Crucially, as shown in the structure, the DMS we found in CLIPS appear either at the very beginning of the sentence as in (1), or right after the subject as in (2), or in the immediate surrounding of the VP: in between an auxiliary and the participle in compound forms (as in (3)), or immediately after the inflected verb (as in 5). We found also a number of cases with *diciamo/praticamente* appearing in between a deontic modal and the infinitive verb as in (6).
- In order to explain this distribution, we extend Giorgi’s (2016) proposal for epistemic adverbs. Analyzing *probabilmente* ‘probably’, Giorgi demonstrates that epistemic adverbs may occupy two basic positions, one for each phase: one above IP (indicated as Epistemic 1) and one within the IP, just above the vP (indicated as Epistemic 2) Applying Giorgi’s proposal to our data, we argue that: In (1) and (2) *diciamo* is based-generated in Epistemic1, which is the canonical position for epistemic adverbs in Cinque 1999, and, in fact, it has always propositional scope.
- In (3), we argue that *diciamo* is in Epistemic2. In fact, it is located in between the auxiliary and the participle. Notice that *diciamo* is structurally within the scope of the negation but still it has propositional scope on the whole sentence. Here, differently

from epistemic adverbs like *probably*, no interpretation conflict arises because *diciamo* is a DM and, as such, it can never be negated.

- Examples (5) and (6) show interesting cases in which the scope of the DM may be ambiguous.
- In (5), *diciamo* with a flat intonation has scope only on the following constituent. We need to postulate that it is located in a functional position that acts as a modifier of the PP. However, the exact nature of this position is still an open issue.
- To have scope on the whole preposition, instead, *diciamo* has to have a parenthetical intonation. We analyze this case as a right dislocation structure, with *diciamo* in Epistemic1 and the clause moved to a higher position in CP with the stranding of the PP.
- Notice that also for (6), where the DM occurs between a deontic modal verb and the infinitive, the scope changes on the basis of the prosodic contour: with the flat intonation *diciamo* has scope on what follows, while as parenthetical has scope also on the modal verb. So here again we have to postulate two different structures.
- To sum up, we extend Giorgi's (2016) proposal arguing that these positions can in fact host not only epistemic adverbs, but also constituents of different nature and origin, as the two epistemic DMs analyzed so far

We compared then the DMs produced by the L2 speakers

- The L2 speakers express the same hedging -so epistemic- function as *diciamo/praticamente* in L1 - using only *veramente* 'really' as DM, which occupies the same positions and has the same scope as *diciamo* in L1:
- Between Subject and Verb as in (i)
- Immediately after the inflected verb as in (ii) and (iii)
- Between the auxiliary and the participle as in (iv)
- This is quite interesting because, as shown in the graph above, the form *veramente* is never attested with this function in the productions of the native speakers, while L2 speakers use it there very frequently. As a matter of fact, in all the examples the use of *veramente* is pragmatically infelicitous and native speakers never produce it with the same discursive use.
- Notice then that the meaning of *veramente* is bleached, and we argue that it is the result of the interference with the speakers' L1, Dutch, and in particular with the Dutch marker *echt*, which can have precisely the same hedging function as *veramente*.
- We conclude then that, both in L1 and in L2, the high and low peripheral areas for the expression of epistemicity are activated, yet non-native speakers still did not acquire the use of *diciamo* and *praticamente* as epistemic DM, so they resort to a semantically bleached form adapted from Dutch, their L.
- An important aspect still remains to be solved in our analysis, that is the issue concerning the categorial status of DMs, i.e. if they are in Head or Specifier position.

Then, only in the L2 corpus we found interesting examples where the DMs with flat intonation occur within a constituent:

- As in the case of example (1), where the DM occurs between the head and the complement. Notice that *dunque* is prosodically integrated in the constituent, in the sense that it is not surrounded by pauses, as shown in the figure, and its meaning is completely bleached. We then argue that its function is to lexicalize a pause.

- For these cases we propose an analysis in line with Corver (2015). Corver analyses interjections and curse expressions as bare roots, that is lexical vocabulary items that are not specified for categorial information or any other formal-syntactic feature.
- Crucially, as Corver shows, these elements are in fact direct expression of our emotion system.
- When processing a second language, speakers are put in a salient emotion state, and thus they use constituent-internal DMs to fill a pause and sound more fluent. In this sense, constituent internal DMs in L2 function as an alternative to hesitations.

Thank you very much for your attention. Any comment and suggestion are more than welcome!