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► **To cite this version:**

Joan Busquets, Dale Koike, Robert E. Vann. Spanish 'no,sí': Reactives Moves to FTAs, Part 1: Discourse Relations and Cognitive States. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2001, 33 (5), pp.701-723. hal-01654330

**HAL Id: hal-01654330**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01654330>**

Submitted on 11 Jan 2018

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## SPANISH ‘NO, SÍ’:

### REACTIVE MOVES TO PERCEIVED FACE THREATENING ACTS,

#### PART I: DISCOURSE RELATIONS AND COGNITIVE STATES

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#### Abstract

This paper is the first installment of a two-part pragmatic analysis of a previously uninvestigated discourse particle in Spanish, *no, sí*. In this paper we examine the distribution of the particle in conversational interaction, discussing discourse structure and the discourse relations involved in the use of the particle. Our data show that *no, sí* is used in response to particular kinds of antecedent questions/utterances and also in an internal usage. The *no, sí* responses are also examined in terms of the cognitive states of the interactants according to the functions of correction, acceptance, or rejection.

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#### 1.0 Introduction

Yes/no questions and responses to them (question/answer pairs, or QAPs), along with statements and responses (statement/answer pairs, or SAPs), represent one of the most basic forms of daily verbal interaction. Upon examining such interactions on a pragmatic level in Spanish, one finds a particular reactive expression that illustrates how an individual can interpret a perceived pragmatic intent of a given question or statement and respond to it. This expression is the Spanish response *no, sí*, literally, ‘no, yes’, which we examine in a two-part study. In Part I, this paper examines the discourse structure of the dialogues in which the particle is used in our data, as well as the discourse relations and cognitive states of the interactants involved in the dialogues. In Part II (forthcoming), the use of *no, sí* is discussed in functional terms with respect to politeness, ‘footing’, and preferred and dispreferred answers. We believe that, by showing both the underlying structural bases and the pragmatic functions of the particle, we can attain a clear and complete description of the particle.<sup>1</sup>

The data, drawn from conversations with speakers of Spanish in Catalonia, Spain, except where noted, illustrate the kind of QAPs and SAPs that are analyzed in the present investigation. The main source of the examples we investigate is a set of interviews between a linguistic researcher and 58 Spanish speakers in Barcelona, usually concerning the topic of language use.<sup>2</sup>

In (1), the interviewer (I) asks a question framed in negative terms, and the informant (X) responds first with a negative answer, followed immediately by two affirmative answers, and then a clarification of what he meant in his reply:

- (1) (I) O sea, ¿no no tienes una buena opinión de los catalanistas?  
*So, don't you have a good opinion of the Catalanists?*  
 (X) **No, sí sí**, de los catalanistas sí, o sea yo soy catalanista.  
*No, I do! Regarding the Catalanists definitely, I mean, I am Catalanist.*

The informant could just as well have responded to the question or statement without using *no*, which leads us to question the function of the negation in this response. Assuming the Gricean Principle of Cooperation (1975) is operational in most interactions, the set of possible answers to most yes/no questions in Spanish includes those given in Table 1.

Table 1  
 Possible answers to yes/no questions in Spanish

Response	Description
<i>No</i>	Simple negation or some other form of negation (e.g., <i>Nunca</i> 'Never').
<i>Sí</i>	Simple affirmation, or some other form of affirmation (e.g., <i>Claro</i> 'Of course').
<i>Sí, no</i>	Complex affirmation composed of affirmation and negation (e.g., <i>Sí, no, es cierto</i> 'Yes, no, it's true') <sup>3</sup>
<i>No, sí</i>	???
Other	Neither affirmation nor negation (e.g., another question, such as <i>Pues, tú ¿qué crees?</i> 'Well, what do <u>you</u> think?' as a response to the question in (1).

This study focuses only on the *no, sí* response, because of its complex and intriguing pragmatic function. We believe that this function may be crosslinguistic in nature. A similar particle in many dialects of English is *no, yeah*, as given in example (2):

- (2) (A) I think people around here talk funny.  
 (B) No, yeah, I know what you mean.

This form appears to be fossilized in English. It appears unlikely that the speaker would use *yes* in place of *yeah*, suggesting that the *yeah* is not used here to express affirmation alone. The pragmatic effect of *no, yes* is one that would convey uncertainty, or waffling on an opinion. We will argue that, although Spanish has not reduced *sí* like English has reduced *yes* to *yeah*, *no, sí* has been grammaticalized (or pragmaticalized) to varying degrees into a discourse particle. This grammaticalization is evident in the relative lack of pause between the two adverbs

when they function together as a discourse particle. Below we distinguish two levels of grammaticalization, indicated by punctuation: hyphenated *no-sí* is fully grammaticalized, *no, sí* with a comma is partially grammaticalized, and *No. Sí.* with periods is simply a case of consecutive, independent adverbs. While at times in our analysis we will find it necessary to distinguish the partially and the fully grammaticalized forms of the particle using this punctuation, we will also generally use the notation *no, sí* to refer to either of the two grammaticalized forms indiscriminately when degree of grammaticalization is not central to the argument.

In the rest of this paper, we argue that in Spanish, this phenomenon semantically relates to the structural organization of the dialogue, illustrating particular discourse relations. Furthermore, in part II (forthcoming), we argue that it occurs as a pragmatic response to a perceived face-threatening act (henceforth FTA), expressing an initially negative response and a hedge or redress that has a broader interactional significance for the conversation to follow. That is, the *no, sí* particle conveys an evaluative move that signals to the other interactant that an FTA was perceived. Thus we believe that the particle illustrates a kind of binary processing: one on the semantic level, or more specifically, on the level of discourse relations, and another on the pragmatic level.

Our semantic-discursive analysis demonstrates that, in terms of structure, a form of *no, sí* occurs in our data as a response to any of five contexts: (a) questions that appear to offer an alternative; (b) a negative question; (c) a non-question (i.e., a statement); (d) an individual's own utterances (internal use); and (e) multiple questions. We submit that the particle can reflect various functions in response to its antecedent speech act and illustrate different communicative strategies related to inferences about the cognitive states of the person issuing the antecedent utterance.

To represent concisely this multiplexity of intertwined pragmatic functions that we find in the *no, sí* particle, we propose the formulae given below:

(3) COMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES

(a) Discourse relations and expectations:

*no*acceptance/rejection + *sí*affirmation/correction

(b) Alignment

*no*acknowledge perceived FTA/initiate counter FTA + *sí*hedge/alignment

(3a) and (3b) represent two different pragmatic dimensions. In (3a), which we develop in this paper, we are concerned with the linguistic structure itself and a set of default inferences about the cognitive states of the conversants. In (3b), which we develop in part II (forthcoming) we address *politeness* as a universal social phenomenon linking sociocultural norms, linguistic form, and function (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

These points are discussed further in the following sections: Section 2 presents some linguistic data on which the different functions of *no, sí* are based. Section 3 situates the semantic and discourse functions within the larger domain of discourse

relations and cognitive states. Finally, Section 4 presents a summary of Part I of the study.

## 2.0 *No, Sí*: The Data

Before we proceed with our analysis of the pragmatic structure of *no, sí*, we will present some of the data. In our conversational excerpts, the data are presented such that in each dialog, (I) represents the interviewer, and (X) represents the informant.<sup>4</sup> The data actually contain three separate forms of *no* followed directly by *sí*, which respond to five different discourse contexts, as follows:

Discourse Context 1: a Yes-No-Question (YNQ) and an alternative question (AltQ) in which the second alternative is an implicit *or not*, in the form of a stylistic variant of *o qué* (or what). X's use of *no, sí* is to confirm or replace what X perceives I's presuppositions to be.

Discourse Context 2: The second set of data illustrates a QAP in which negation appears overtly expressed in the question and the *no* of the *no, sí* expresses denial of the assumption or expectation that X infers from the negated Q.

Discourse Context 3: The third data set exemplifies *no, sí* as an implicit acceptance of the presuppositions implicated in I's non-Q utterance.

Discourse Context 4: The fourth instance of use is an *internal* use in which X re-affirms his own intentions or statements.

Discourse Context 5: Finally, the fifth context involves separate answers to two independent questions.

The five uses correspond to different phonetic realizations of *no sí*; namely, either with no pause between the two adverbials, with a short pause, or with a long pause as two independent answers. In the first case, *no, sí* functions as a fully grammaticalized particle (*no-sí*). In the next three cases, *no, sí* functions as a partially grammaticalized compound, whereas in the last case, the two adverbs function independently of one another. The five contexts and three forms of the fully or partly grammaticalized particle are given in Table 2, which illustrates the discourse structure to which each variant of *no, sí* responds as well as the prosodic and grammaticalized features of each variant :

Table 2  
Distribution of *no, sí* variants by discourse structure

	P in I's AltQ	P in I's NegQ	P in I's NonQ	X's own P	P in I's Multiple Qs
no-sí (no pause) [ + g]	+				
	ex. (4), (5)				
no, sí (short pause) No. Sí. (long pause) [ - g]		+	+	+	
		ex. (6)-(10)	ex. (11)	ex. (12)-(13)	
					+
					ex. (14)

P=presupposition, I=interviewer, X=informant, g=grammaticalized, ex=examples

2.1.- Presuppositions implicated in I's AltQ [no comma, no pause]:

In examples (4) and (5), the alternative *o qué* (or what) underlies an AltQ with *or not*. In these cases, I is not directly interested in a possible denial to his question, but rather expects his supposition either confirmed or replaced. That is, he wants an explanation of some specific fact. Therefore, we believe that *no* here loses its typically encoded meaning as a direct answer to I's Q, and we interpret *no* by its non-literal meaning, related to a set of specific pragmatic effects to be explained in section 3.3.

- (4) (I) ¿Te ha costado esto del diálogo mucho o qué [= o no]?  
*Was the dialog hard for you or what?*
- (X) **No-sí**, porque-  
**No yeah**, because-
- (I) ¿Por qué?  
*Because what?*
- (X) Más que nada porque hay muchas eh em, o sea situaciones que nunca, que no lo utilizaría yo nunca.  
*More than anything else because there are a lot of, um, situations in which I would never use it.*
- (I) Porque ¿no hablas castellano mucho? ¿o porque tenías que difer- diferir entre como hablas tú y como hablan los demás?  
*Because you don't speak Spanish very often or because you had to differentiate between how you speak and how others speak?*
- (X) Sí, no como hablan los demás, no, dependiendo de de diferentes, o sea claro que no, diferentes, entes sociales, diferentes clases. Todo el mundo supongo que habla mejor o peor.  
*Yeah, not how others speak, no. It depends on different, I mean, of course not, different, social groups, different classes. I suppose that each individual speaks a little better or worse.*
- (5) (I) Y ¿qué te parece Miki Moto?  
*And what do you think about Miki Moto?*
- (X) La verdad es que lo he visto poco y no lo podría juzgar, a mis amigos les gusta (risas) pero es que no lo veo porque normalmente \*\*\*.  
*The truth is I haven't seen him very often, and I couldn't judge him, my friends like him (laughter) but I don't watch him because usually \*\*\*(unintelligible)*
- (I) ¿Que no ves la tele o qué [= o no]?  
*You don't watch the TV or what?*
- (X) **No-sí**, pero el horario normalmente no no me va bien. Además, en casa no no les gusta. Esto sí, o sea que tampoco me lo dejarían mirar a lo mejor  
**No yeah**, but usually the schedule doesn't fit well with mine. Besides, they don't like it at home. Really, that is, they probably wouldn't let me watch it .

## 2.2.- Presuppositions implicated in I's NegQ [comma, pause]

In examples (6)-(10), X responds to so-called negated questions (*So you don't...?*) or negative statements, in such a way as to disagree with the negative implicature and correct the implicated expectation of the proposition expressed in I's utterances. The *no* foreshadows this correction and acknowledges that some negative element has been perceived by "mirroring the negativity" of the implicature. In saying that *no, sí* is mirroring the negativity overtly expressed in the question, we refer only to structure and not to function. Regarding function, X uses *no, sí* to reject the assumption he infers from I's Q, denying the expectation by *no* and correcting it by *sí* plus the explanation that follows.

(6) (a more detailed excerpt for example (1))

(I) Pero ¿tienes la impresión que la mayoría de los catalanes piensan como tú, o sea... que son pacíficos, y que no no les gusta la guerra, ni la violencia?

*But, do you get the impression that most Catalans think like you do, I mean, that they are pacifists and that they don't like war or violence?*

(X) Yo creo que hay de todo como todo, ¿no?, pero creo que... una inmensa mayoría, es bastante pacífica.

*I think that there is a little bit of everything like with anything, you know? But I think that the vast majority of people are pretty pacifist.*

(I) ¿Y los catalanistas también?

*And the Catalanists too?*

(X) Aaaa, creo que sí. Siempre hay esa rama radical y tal, pero no encuentro que sean estos una parte representativa de... de los catalanes, esa parte radical y que pueden provocar las destrozas o lo que sea sino, creo que el catalán es más bien pacifista, pacífico.

*I think so. There is always that radical branch that can provoke trouble, but I don't find those people representative of all Catalans. I think that Catalan people are generally pacifists.*

(I) O sea, no ¿no tienes una buena opinión de los catalanistas?

*So, you don't have a good opinion of the Catalanists?*

(X) **No, sí sí**, de los catalanistas sí, o sea yo soy catalanista. Lo que no tengo buena opinión es de esta gente catalanista o que se hace llamar catalanista, que...aaaa, bajo ese nombre pues..., que siii yo que sé, puede llegar a matar a alguien por ser castellano o por ser... español o por ser algo así.

**No, I do!** *Regarding the Catalanists definitely, I mean, I am Catalanist. The people I don't have a good opinion of are the Catalanists, or the people who call themselves Catalanists, who, under that name, well, I don't know, can go so far as killing someone for being a Castilian or for being Spanish or something like that.*

(I) ¿O sea, no los radicales?

*So, you don't have a good opinion of the radicals?*

(X) Exacto.

*Exactly.*

- (7) (I) Vale, número uno es considerarte catalán.  
*Ok, number one is considering yourself a Catalan.*
- (X) Sí.  
*Yes.*
- (I) Dos, ¿qué es?  
*And number two?*
- (X) Hablar, escribir y pensar...aunque si eres castellano y te consideras catalán, también, no sé...y luego, moverte en un entorno.  
*Speaking, writing, and thinking...although if you're Castilian and you think of yourself as a Catalan, that counts too. I don't know. And also moving in Catalan circles.*
- (I) ¿Y no figura para nada nacer en Cataluña?  
*And being born in Catalonia doesn't matter at all?*
- (X) Hombre, no creo que quiera decir mucho, <>  
*Well, I don't think it means a lot <>*
- (I) ¿Eh?  
*Huh?*
- (X) Pero también. Que no creo que quiera decir mucho pero también.  
*But also, but I don't think it means all that much (repeated)*
- (I) ¿Y dónde está?  
*And where does it fit in?*
- (X) O sea, tú puedes venir de fuera, ¿no? y vivir muchos años aquí y considerarte catalán.  
*I mean, you can come from outside, right? and live many years here, and consider yourself a Catalan.*
- (I) O sea, lo de nacer ¿o es número cuatro, o **no** es ni, ni importante?  
*So, being born here, is it number four, or it is not even important?*
- (X) **No, sí** que entra, lo que pasa es eso  
**No, it does count, that's just the way it is.**
- (I) Que es después de considerarte catalán <>  
*That it goes after considering yourself a Catalan <>*
- (X) Sí.  
*Yes.*
- (8) (I) ¿Dominas...? O sea...olvídate de esta pregunta porque ya me has dicho que **no** hablas catalán.  
*Are you proficient?... Wait ...forget this question because you have already told me that you don't speak Catalan.*
- (X) **No, sí** que hablo catalán.  
**No, I do speak Catalan.**
- (I) Te iba a decir si dominas una una lengua mejor que la otra, pero eso ya lo sabía.  
*I was going to ask you if you know one language better than the other, but that I already knew.*
- (X) No.  
*No.*



- (I) Ya lo sabía ¿no? Castellano ¿Con gente bilingüe, prefieres hablar castellano?  
*I already knew it, right? Castilian, with bilingual people, you prefer to speak Castilian?*
- (X) Sí.  
*Yes.*
- (9) (I) ¿Y alguien que nace aquí, pero que no habla catalán, para ti, **no** puede ser catalán?  
*And someone who is born here, but who doesn't speak Catalan, for you, can't be a Catalan?*
- (X) **No, sí** que lo puede ser. La verdad es que me haces dudar...eeeh...pero claro, nunca lo, nunca lo había pensado ni lo había...  
**No, he can be a Catalan.** *The truth is now you make me wonder...eeeh...but of course I've never thought about it nor...*
- (I) Pues plantéatelo.  
*Well think about it.*
- (X) Sí, me lo planteo. No, pero mirándolo así, supongo que entiendo, se tendría que entender, para mí entender a alguien que es catalán sería que ha nacido aquí, y alguien que no es catalán, alguien que no ha nacido aquí.  
*Yes, I'm thinking about it. No, looking at it that way, I suppose I understand, one would have to understand, to me for someone to be a Catalan, they would have to be born here, and someone who isn't Catalan is someone who wasn't born here.*
- (I) ¿O sea que lo más importante es nacer aquí?  
*So the most important thing is being born here?*
- (X) Seuh, sí claro.  
*Yeah, for sure.*
- (10)(I) ¿Pero eres capaz de mezclar en la misma frase incluso?  
*But can you mix even in the same sentence?*
- (X) Sí porque, como estoy acostumbrada a hablar en castellano para expresarme...me expreso mejor en castellano, entonces, cuando me atrabanco mucho que no...o sea mi vocabulario de catalán es menor que el vocabulario en castellano, entonces, cuando quiero expresar algo y no me sale en catalán pues a lo mejor lo suelto en castellano.  
*Yes because, since I am used to speaking in Castilian to express myself...I express myself best in Castilian, so, when I get tongue-tied...that is, my vocabulary in Catalan is smaller than in Castilian, so, when I want to say something and it doesn't come out easily in Catalan well, maybe I'll just let it loose in Castilian.*
- (I) ¿O sea es por falta de vocabulario más que nada?  
*So it's due to a lack of vocabulary more than anything else?*
- (X) Sí, bueno, y también de fluidez...como...  
*Yes, well and lack of fluency too...like...*

- (I) Bien esto explica el...el que cambies del catalán al castellano, pero no explica por qué cambiarías desde el...del castellano al catalán.  
*Well this explains the...why you change from Catalan to Castilian but it doesn't explain why you would change from the...from Castilian to Catalan.*
- (X) **No, sí**, del castellano al catalán porque...porque empiezo a hablar en castellano, entonces la otra persona, habla en catalán, entonces cambio.  
**No, it does**, from Castilian to Catalan because...because I start to speak in Castilian, then the other person, speaks in Catalan, so I change.

2.3.- Presuppositions implicated in I's utterance (nonQ) [comma, pause]

Example (11) is from another set of data obtained from a meeting between a supervisor (I) and a university teaching assistant (X), both Mexicans but residents of the U.S., speaking about the feedback the supervisor has for the teacher after a class visit. In this example, the use of *no, sí* is related to an acknowledgment of the proposition contained in I's utterance.

- (11)(I) Lo hiciste muy muy bien en el ejercicio de preguntas personales.  
*You did it very well in the exercise on personal questions.*
- (X) Qué bien.  
*That's great.*
- (I) Eh: quizás solamente, bueno esto no tanto en las preguntas personales, pero en la sección de cuando ellos hicieron unas traducciones=(  
*Eh: maybe just, well that's not important for the personal questions, but for the section in which they did the translations=(*
- (X) Ah, sí, hicieron unas traducciones.  
*Ah, yes, they did some translations.*
- (I) Quizá, lo que m--...para mí hizo un poquito de falta es que ellos repitieran a coro, por ejemplo 'eran las cinco', mm 'cuando vivía en Lima enseñaba'. Más que nada para que ellos acostumbren a oírla. 'Vivía', 'enseñaba':  
Maybe what... in my opinion was lacking is for them to repeat in chorus, for example, 'it was five o'clock', 'when I lived in Lima I used to teach'. More than anything else so they would get used to hearing it. 'I used to live there', 'I used to teach'.
- (X) **No, sí, es cierto, sí.**  
**No, yeah, it's true, yes.**

2.4.- X's own presuppositions [comma, pause]

Examples (12) and (13) illustrate an *internal* use of *no, sí*, in which X re-affirms his own intentions (cf. 12) or statements (cf. 13).

- (12)(I) Pues bueno yo estoy sin preguntas. ¿Quieres verlas y y si quieres ampliarme más pues...?  
*Well I'm out of questions. Do you want to see them and if you want to add more, well...?*
- (X) No no (risas).  
*No no (laughter).*

- (I) ¡Ya estás, ya estás!  
So you're done then, you're done!
- (X) Sí, ¿no?, ah no **no, sí.**  
*Yes, aren't I? No, well, yeah.*
- (I) ¡Bueno tú mismo! ¿Ha habido algo que has querido has querido comentar algo más y no has podido? ¿o ya está?  
*Well, it's up to you! Was there something that you wanted to comment more on but weren't able to, or is that all?*
- (X) No, en principio.  
*No, theoretically.*
- (13)(I) ¿Tienes una opinión positiva, negativa, o más bien neutra sobre la monarquía española?  
*Do you have a positive, negative, or neutral opinion about the Spanish monarchy?*
- (X) Negativa.  
*Negative.*
- (I) ¿Por qué?  
*Why?*
- (X) Porque son unos chupones que viven del cuento y, no, yo, no, aparte, eh, yo me siento republicano, en el sentido francés sí. **No, sí sí.**  
*Because they're bloodsuckers who live off the people and no, I don't, besides, I feel republican, in the French sense, yeah. No, it's true.*

#### 2.5.- Presuppositions implicated in I's multiple Qs [period, long pause]

In example (14), *No. Sí.* are two independent answers that illustrate sequential responses to two different Qs. The notation <> indicates the overlapping of turns; that is, X responds to each Q that I poses as I poses it, interrupting I's formulation of Q2 with an answer to Q1. The response to Q1 is *no* and the response to Q2 is *sí*. Obviously, the co-occurrence of the adverbs *no* and *sí* here is merely sequential and in no way grammaticalized. Here we do not have a discourse particle but rather two simple adverbs.

- (14)(X) No tenemos moneda...  
*We don't have currency...*
- (I) ¿Te molesta esto? ¿Te gustaría tener una moneda catalana? <> ¡Que antes la habéis tenido!  
Does it bother you? Would you like to have a Catalan currency? <> You had one before!
- (X) **No. Sí.** Eeeh...a mí me es igual la, la moneda, ¿sabes?, hay cosas más importantes que la moneda, ¿no?, cosas muchísimo más importantes que la moneda.  
**No. Yes.** Eeeh...I don't care about the, the currency, you know? There are more important things than currency, right? things much more important than currency.
- (I) ¿Cómo?  
*Like what?*

- (X) Como por ejemplo, quee...que se nos respete, políticamente, y que...y que se nos tenga consideración como, como país, ¿no? Eso es lo que, más importante que, que un...na moneda.  
*Like, for instance, that...that people respect us, politically, and that...and that they consider us, a country, you know. That's what's more important than, than a...currency.*

In this study we focus mainly on instances of type *no-sí* and *no, sí*, leaving aside *No. Sí*. In the remaining sections of the paper, we sketch the discursive structure of these variants of the discourse particle. Unless otherwise indicated, we will refer to both grammaticalized forms with the same designation, except where we wish to distinguish degree of grammaticalization.

### 3.0. Introduction to the discursive analysis of *no, sí*

The *no, sí* answer to a given utterance in Spanish raises several questions. First, in which context of conversation is it appropriate to produce answers with both polarity terms *no* and *sí*? Second, under which discourse relations is it appropriate or felicitous to use a form of *no, sí*? Third, according to Green & Carberry (1994), responses are classified as ‘direct’ (with a *yes* or *no* overtly expressed in the answer) and ‘indirect’ (those that have a *yes/no* meaning). Is a variant of *no, sí* a direct or an indirect response to a Q? Fourth, is *no, sí* equally as informative, cooperative, or polite as a *sí* would be alone?

We claim that variants of *no, sí* are sensitive not only to the syntactic form of antecedent utterances but also to the inferences derived from them; more specifically, the particle appears in response to intentions and expectations that speakers infer from previous utterances. Other speech act types, such as *Explanation, Commentary*, etc. are closely related to cognitive states (beliefs, assumptions, expectations, etc.) of the participants. The grammaticalized forms of *no, sí* in Spanish provide an indirect answer to a previous question or statement, with a set of pragmatically determined meanings. In part II of this investigation (forthcoming), we analyze these meanings in terms of Brown & Levinson's model of *politeness*, claiming that *no, sí* reflects a conversational move directly related to FTAs. However, we believe that in order to understand the politeness functions of the particle *no, sí*, one must first understand the discourse relationships on which such functions are built. The structural analysis that we present in the rest of this paper deals with the relationship of the compound particle to the discourse, considering building blocks incrementally from units related by discourse relations. We will argue that, for the compound particle *no, sí*, implicatures transcend underlying semantic structure and give rise to highly specialized discourse functions.

### 3.1. Coherence and discourse structure

Within the tradition of formal semantics there are several important approaches to questions (see Belnap, 1985, Karttunen, 1977, Groenendijk and Stokhof, 1984, or more recently Ginzburg, 1995). Generally, the view in formal semantics is that the

meaning of a question is a function from worlds (indices, situations, etc.) to a set of propositions (or set of indices). This is known as a condition on *answerhood*, or the set of true answers to a given question. From a propositional point of view, one asks a question Q to check whether a proposition P holds in all worlds in a present state of knowledge. The answer to a question is 'yes' if the proposition expressed by the question holds in every world in the present knowledge set, 'no' otherwise. Some approaches take a question as an *incomplete* object, which, in order to be completed, needs an answer. Thus, the question and the answer comprise a complete proposition. An examination of the data collected with *no*, *sí* responses in Spanish reveals that they cannot be formulated in propositional terms, since they appeal to pragmatically determined meanings. We claim that conversants use such responses to accept or reject implicated (or inferred) assertions, suggestions, expectations, etc. In doing so, participants in a dialogue identify acceptances or rejections by recognizing logical inconsistency either directly from what was said, or by means of default inferences (Allwood et al., 1992; Walker, 1996). Moreover, as previously noted in the literature, conversants use discourse structure as well as logical reasoning in inferring other agents' cognitive states (Walker, 1996; Asher and Lascarides, 1998; Cristea and Webber, 1997).

Discourse and context theories can be broadly divided into two approaches; namely, *coherence-based* theories, and the *Relevance-Theoretical* framework. A coherence theory of discourse context assumes that texts are coherent in virtue of a definable set of coherence relations (i.e., a set of implicit relations that hold the discourse together), and the recovery of such relations makes comprehension possible (Hobbs, 1985; Mann & Thompson's RST, 1987; Green, 1989; Asher, 1993; to name just a few). A radically different view is adopted by the *Relevance-Theoretical* approach, exemplified by the work in Sperber & Wilson (1986, 1995), Blass (1990) or Blakemore (1992) among others. The most striking difference is the interpretation of an utterance in a given context. Within *Relevance* theory, accessing a context in which an utterance has to be interpreted involves a cost, and the most relevant interpretation is given by the least processing effort.

In contrast to *Relevance* theory, the analysis we present below is in spirit closest to *coherence* theory, in which discourse relations are not limited to organizational aspects of the discourse; they also affect the subject matter. Moreover, as recent proposals to dialogue have stated (Poesio & Traum, 1997; Asher & Lascarides, 1998), a complex interaction between semantics, discourse context and the cognitive states of the participants is needed to explore the role of questions and answers in dialogue.

Since utterances are actions (speech acts), they have the ability to modify the mental states of the participants (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). These modifications are captured not by truth conditions (the truth or falsity of some expressed proposition), but rather in terms of *felicity conditions*, which we interpret as part of the *coherence* discourse context, or links between speech acts (Asher and Lascarides, 1998; Poesio and Traum, 1997). In this framework, the role of the discourse structure is to constrain and specify the semantic content of a sentence in light of the way it connects to the previous discourse. Following the dynamic approach to dialogue in Asher and Lascarides (1998), we assume that each relation corresponds to a *speech act type*, where the second term of the relation is a speech

act of the appropriate type relative to its discourse context. From this point of view, for instance, *Explanation*(a,b) is the speech act of asserting *explanation*, relative to the context a, performed by the agent who uttered b. Thus, a response to a given question will be *coherent* if speakers can infer a rhetorical relation between these sentences and the context of their semantic representation (and their model of the addressee's semantic representation). Before going into the analysis of the functions of *no sí*, let us first characterize the discourse structure in which this particle can appear.

**3.2.- Discourse structure and uses of *no, sí***

According to our data, fully or partially grammaticalized variants of *no, sí* can occur in four discourse contexts. The first (actually a case of *no-sí*) concerns a question or statement without explicit negativity, as seen in the tree in Figure (1a), where □□ and □□ are propositions expressed by the utterances produced by the speaker (S) and the addressee (A) in a given dialogue (D). This structure is found in what we have labeled AltQs. The second structure contains the presence of *no* in a given question with the proposition □. In this case of polarity reversal or expectation contravention (Michaelis, 1994), seen in the tree in Figure (1b), the structure reflects a correction of all or some previously stated propositions, usually uttered by the speaker. In Figure (1c), *no, sí* appears in contexts in which the addressee seeks agreement (acceptance) with the speaker's inferred suggestions and in contexts in which the addressee seeks reaffirmation of his own statements (*internal* use of *no, sí*).

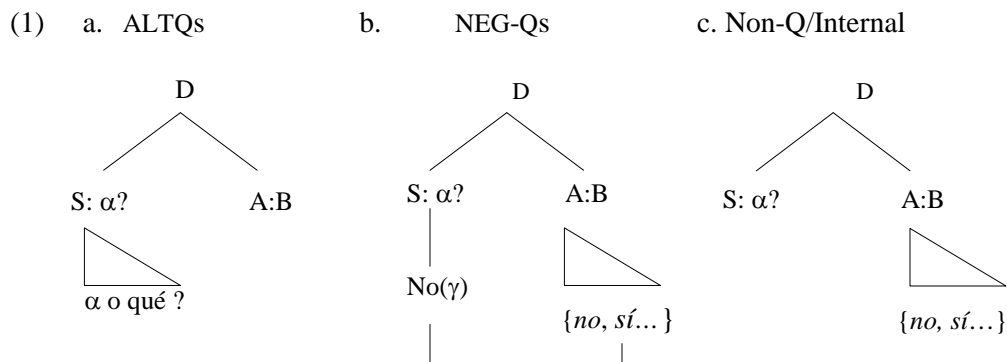


FIGURE.1- Discourse structure of *no, sí*

**3.3. The interpretation of *no, sí***

Let us now describe the function of this particle, taking into account the general structure of the dialogue in which it appears. The structure in Figure (1a) illustrates what we have called AltQ, since the *o qué* (or what) is an alternative form of *o no* (or not), with some pragmatic differences, to be discussed later. In such a case, the speaker is looking for more information from the addressee, offering him a set of

alternatives to his question. The presence of *o qué?* (or what) indicates that certain alternatives related to the context of conversation are open. We believe that such is the case for our AltQ's examples (4) and (5). In (4) the underlying structure is:

- (4) (I) ¿Te ha costado esto del diálogo mucho o qué [=o no]?  
Was the dialog hard for you [or not]?  
 (X) **No-sí**, porque-  
**No yeah**, because-

In order to satisfy this underlying *o no* (or not), the addressee is, in some way, forced to introduce a causal explanation in the answer. Bolinger (1978, p. 90) points out that the effect of *or not* in a question is to add a "tinge of greater negativeness". Thus, the speaker is *suggesting* a *no* as a response. According to Bolinger, it is one point on a scale of insistence. We believe the addressee in (4) perceives this negativity, which is why he uses a *no-sí* as a response. When an AltQ is uttered negatively, as in (5), then the negation excludes this possibility from the list of alternatives, and forces remaining alternatives. As Bolinger (1978) posits, the negation within the question in AltQs plays an independent role, and does not merely repeat something in the underlying structure that could be left out, as in example (4). Bolinger's idea is that, in those cases, no hedging is permitted. Instead, the speaker directly removes a possible denial from the set of alternatives and is expecting an explanation of some specific fact.

The structure in Figure (1b) reflects a correction of the content of the interviewer's utterance in a particular way; that is, the addressee reaffirms what the interviewer negated in his turn. A *correction* interpretation is that the interviewer's and addressee's descriptions are incompatible with respect to one and the same situation. Moreover, the addressee's correction provides the correct description of the situation being described (Gardent et. al., 1996). We are dealing with discourse situations according to the conversants' opinions and personal statements about a certain state of affairs. Hence, the cognitive states of the participants come into play in making inferences about intentions, expectations, or suggestions during dialogue processing.

As we found in our data, *no*, *sí* does not always act as an anaphor that rejects certain information from its antecedent and that offers an alternative for that rejected information, such as in (8) or in (10). In other cases, such as in (6), (7), and (9), what are corrected are the speaker's implicated expectations, presuppositions or assumptions generated by the dialogue processing. It is worth noting, moreover, that whereas in examples (8) and (10) we find an assertion/correction, in examples (6), (7), and (9), the situation is slightly different, since there are questions/rejections. In the former cases, the addressee corrects the speaker's implicated beliefs, while in the latter, what are rejected are the speaker's presumed expectations. In examples (6), (7), and (9), the negative questions implicate negative assumptions. The speaker is asking whether his assumptions are true. This strategy is related also to the speaker's intentions; namely, to find out the addressee's reaction to a given proposition (Koike, 1994).

Other uses of *no*, *sí*, included in the structure of Figure (1c), correspond to a peculiar instance of this particle, which contrasts with the contexts exemplified in

(1a,b). The first is found in contexts in which I gives a suggestion to X, and *no, sí* functions as an *implicit acceptance* of its antecedent speech act. The second use of *no, sí* included in (1c) refers back to something that has been uttered by X. The particle appears at the end of X's utterance and reaffirms his personal position about the topic of conversation. We refer to this use as *internal*, although it serves as a final "recapitulation" of a conversational unit. Using Lakoff's (1973) terms, we could define it as a strengthener or emphatic hedge, since this use of *no, sí* modifies the force of X's speech act.

According to our data, then, we find that different discourse structures play different roles in conversation. Different instances of *no, sí* are closely related to internal aspects of different antecedent speech act types in the discourse situation, and refer to different communicative strategies related to default inferences about the cognitive states of the participants. As pointed out in Asher & Lascarides (1998), small changes in the surface structure have profound effects on discourse structure. That is the case for our *no, sí* in Spanish, since variants of the same linguistic form add different meanings to the context of conversation, depending on the expectations and suggestions implicit in the speaker's utterances.

To illustrate so far how discourse relations interact with *no, sí* answers, let us return to example (6), repeated here in part:

- (6) (I) O sea, no ¿no tienes una buena opinión de los catalanistas?  
*So, you don't have a good opinion of the Catalanists?*
- (X) **No, sí sí**, de los catalanistas sí, o sea yo soy catalanista. Lo que no tengo buena opinión es de esta gente catalanista o que se hace llamar catalanista, que...aaaa, bajo ese nombre pues..., que siii yo que sé, puede llegar a matar a alguien por ser castellano o por ser... español o por ser algo así.  
**No, I do!** *Regarding the Catalanists definitely, I mean, I am Catalanist. The people I don't have a good opinion of are the Catalanists, or the people who call themselves Catalanists, who, under that name, well, I don't know, can go so far as killing someone for being a Castilian or for being Spanish or something like that.*
- (I) ¿O sea, no los radicales?  
*So, you don't have a good opinion of the radicals?*
- (X) Exacto.  
*Exactly.*

Following Asher and Lascarides (1998), a **Question-Answer-Pair**( $\alpha, \beta$ ) holds between a speaker's question and an addressee's response. In the context illustrated in example (6), at the level of discourse structure, we find a *Contrast* between the interviewer's question and the informant's answer with *no, sí*. The contrast discourse relation implies complementary themes, with opposite polarities. Considering the cognitive states of the conversants in example (6), *Contrast*( $\alpha, \beta$ ) is coherent if  $\beta$  indicates that some expectation arising from  $\alpha$  has been violated. Since  $\beta$  violates an *expectation* arising from  $\alpha$ , namely, that it is not true that 'X doesn't like Catalanists', we should consider not only the semantic content of  $\alpha$ , but



also the inferences we obtained from the utterance  $\alpha$ . There are conflicting polarities<sup>5</sup> between the interviewer's question and the addressee's response.

The propositions expressed by the speaker and the addressee are complementary, and the addressee's turn is recovered elliptically. The latter's utterance is *correcting* the speaker's statement in some way, but what is relevant here is the violation with respect to his expectations. Nevertheless, the *no, sí* response is not incompatible with other speech act types. As example (6) illustrates, the addressee makes his response compatible with *Elaboration*. The elaboration identifies an element or subject matter and presents additional detail about the situation or some element of the topic (i.e., about Catalanists). The addressee continues, revealing a personal attitude concerning the subject matter. Propositional attitudes typically indicate the presence of a *Commentary*. According to discourse approaches by *coherence* relations, if the dialogue is coherent, all this information has to be attached to the global structure of the dialogue. The tree in Figure 2 below illustrates the organization of this structure. For our purposes, we can assume that  $\alpha$  is the semantic representation of the negative question uttered by the Speaker;  $\beta$  is the content of the Addressee's response; *no, sí* is contained in the node  $\delta_1$  and  $\delta_2$  corresponds to 'de los catalanistas sí, o sea, yo soy catalanista'. *Lo que no tengo buena opinión es de esta gente catalanista o que se hace llamar catalanista, que...aaa,...etc.'*:

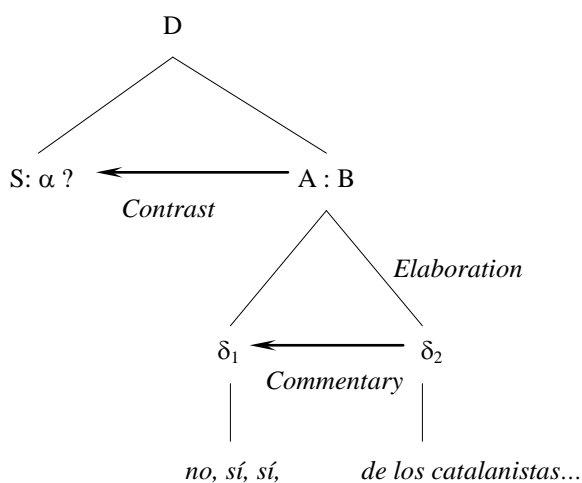


FIGURE.2. Structural organization of *Contrast*, *Elaboration*, and *Commentary*

We would like to stress that the dialogue in (6) shows that *no, sí* is sensitive to the general structure of the discourse, and introduces other discourse functions, such as *Elaboration*, *Explanation*, or *Commentary*. It satisfies coherence and is still compatible with its specific function in a given context. This analysis, however, must be expanded with default reasoning in order to show how *no, sí* responses go beyond the linguistic structure itself. Furthermore, there are two separate, additional issues: on the one hand, the intention or denial of implicated or inferred expectations carried by *no*, and the direct answer given by *sí*; on the other hand, the *implicit acceptance* implied by the use of *no, sí*. We address these issues in the next subsections.

### 3.3.1. *No, Sí* and Expectations

The pragmatic functions of *no, sí* are not captured from the linguistic structure itself, but rather from the particle's function in a specific linguistic context. Discourse theorists continually assert that conversations have several dimensions and that the linguistic structure captures only one of these dimensions. We assume that a discourse context is a structured object consisting of questions and propositions mediated by discourse relations. Whereas the semantics, and the pragmatics in part, give us the propositional content of the discourse, the pragmatic effects give us the intentions of the participants. The dialogues in our corpus exemplify that it is difficult to capture the complete meaning of *no, sí* without taking into account the intentions and beliefs of the participants. More specifically, it is necessary to consider how *no, sí* exploits the changes in the participants' cognitive states as the dialogue proceeds. In this section we consider some of the interactions between *no, sí* and the cognitive states of the conversants.

Let us look again at the context in example (6). As already stated, *no, sí* in this case denies the presuppositions implicated by the interviewer's question, and corrects the implicated position that 'X does not have a good opinion of Catalanists'. The inference in this case is as follows: «I believes that X believes no P and that is why I expects a confirmation-*no* from X». Hence, what X denies is I's beliefs and expectations, which are linguistically marked by *no*. Here, we illustrate this situation using a single inference with a belief operator (**Bel**) (where "~" stands for truth-functional negation, and "→" is the truth-functional conditional) :

- (15) I: **Bel**<sub>I</sub> (Q → **Bel**<sub>X</sub> (~P))  
 X: ~(**Bel**<sub>X</sub> (Q → ~P)) & **Bel**<sub>X</sub> (P)

Such is the case illustrated in example (6). I infers from information in a presupposed, entailed or assumed Q that ~P holds in the cognitive state of the addressee X. The *no, sí* answer denies this inference, and reaffirms the proposition P as true.<sup>6</sup> The addressee gives some information to the interviewer who makes an inference according to which if Q holds then ~P is true. Hence, (15) above is a consequence of the inference previously established by the speaker.<sup>7</sup> Notice, however, that in examples (6) - (9) we have different sources of I's cognitive states, which should give rise to different inferences.<sup>8</sup>

This situation might explain why the speaker's utterance seeks a confirmation-*no*, instead of a confirmation-*sí*, and reflects the speaker's anticipation with respect to a possible answer from the informant. This reading is closely related to the pragmatic presuppositions of I's own opinions with respect to the truth of the expressed proposition. The anticipation of I's own opinions gives us a cue in inferring a doubt from the speaker with respect to the background or common ground.

Now we can address the issue of direct and indirect answers to a given question. If we look at our linguistic data, we realize that in all cases where it is appropriate to use a *no, sí* answer, a single *sí* (yes) could be equally cooperative as a response, serving as a direct affirmative response. It is usually assumed that a direct answer is the most cooperative response in conversational interactions. Nevertheless, in the

case of the *no, sí* answer, the addressees illustrate that they believe the falsehood of the presupposition carried by the question. Hence, a direct answer could not be the most cooperative in such a context. We believe that this particle shows how in certain circumstances, an *indirect answer* is more cooperative than a direct one. As pointed out in Kaplan (1983:174), "*when an incorrect presumption is detected, it is more cooperative to correct the presumption than to give a direct response*". With *no, sí* then, we are dealing with a *Corrective Indirect Response*, following Kaplan's terms. The addressee believes that the proposition expressed by the interviewer is false, acknowledges the speaker's perceived presumptions, and corrects wrong impressions about implicated beliefs and personal opinions.

### 3.3.2. No, Sí: Acceptances

Surprisingly, though, *no, sí* does not always reject and correct the speaker. In certain cases, as illustrated by the context in example (11), the same particle that can be used to implicate rejection, can also entail *acceptance*. This peculiar use of the particle is discussed in this subsection.

Walker (1996) demonstrates that there are a variety of ways to indicate acceptance and rejection in dialogues. These forms of acceptance and rejection rely on default inferences from form to function. We have seen above that *no, sí* can carry a rejection of the speaker's utterance, contrasting polarities and correcting S's own assumptions and expectations. We also find an instance of *no, sí*, however, that appears to be a form for indicating acceptance. It can serve as a linguistic cue for distinguishing acceptance from rejection as applied to utterances that explicitly expect an assertion or rejection. This use of *no, sí* is found in our corpus in example (11), which we repeat in part here:

- (11)(I) Eh: quizás solamente, bueno esto no tanto en las preguntas personales, pero en la sección de cuando ellos hicieron unas traducciones=(  
*Eh: maybe just, well that's not important for the personal questions, but for the section in which they made the translations*=(
- (X) Ah, sí, hicieron unas traducciones.  
*Ah, yes, they made some translations.*
- (I) Quizá, lo que m--...para mí hizo un poquito de falta es que ellos repitieran a coro, por ejemplo 'eran las cinco', mm 'cuando vivía en Lima enseñaba'. Más que nada para que ellos acostumbren a oírla. 'Vivía', 'enseñaba':  
*Maybe what... in my opinion was lacking was for them to repeat in chorus, for example, 'it was five o'clock', 'when I lived in Lima I used to teach'. More than anything else so they would get used to hearing it. 'I used to live there', 'I used to teach'.*
- (X) **No, sí, es cierto, sí.**  
*No, yes, it's true, yes.*

The speaker might recognize the informant's utterance with *no, sí* as an acceptance of what she said. Usually, explicit indicators of acceptance provide "no new information" (Whittaker and Stenton, 1988). *No* in (11) provides "no new information" in the context, but adds a new meaning: acceptance of the proposal or

suggestions given by the supervisor. This use of *no, sí* contrasts with the uses discussed above, since there is no negativity in the speaker's utterance, neither suggested or expected and no Q is posed.<sup>9</sup> As Walker (1996) points out, both the "no new information" forms, and the cases of "implicit acceptance" only implicate acceptance under certain circumstances. Walker (1996) establishes two conditions for implicating acceptance: conventional assumption shared between conversants of what she calls *Attitude locus* (sequential position in conversation), and the role of the *Collaborative principle* (provide evidence of a detected discrepancy in belief as soon as possible). With *no, sí* in example (11) we see that both conditions hold. The effect of these principles is that the informant in example (11) has provided no evidence of rejection, or some other evidence that there is a need for clarification in the sequential position in the dialogue. Note that the context in which *no, sí* appears as a form of acceptance is peculiar, and corresponds to a *suggestion* uttered in a special context. In such a case the default inference in (16) is normally sufficient to satisfy the context in (11):

(16) IMPLICIT ACCEPTANCE INFERENCE:

**Suggest**(S,A,  $\alpha$ ) & A: *no, sí* > **Accept**(A, $\alpha$ )

In sum, *implicit acceptance inference* states that the speaker S normally adopts a role in conversation in which he is making a suggestion  $\alpha$ , and he is expecting an acceptance or rejection of  $\alpha$ . If the addressee A utters *no, sí*, then normally (>), S infers by default that the addressee accepts  $\alpha$  as true.<sup>10</sup>

In example (11), the teaching assistant accepts the suggestions made by his supervisor. It appears that *no* is an implicit indicator of acceptance, and is consistent with what the supervisor said. The assumption seems to be that the supervisor infers that the teaching assistant has accepted her proposals or suggestions. According to this principle, both conversants remain coordinated on what constitutes the common ground (Thomason, 1990). That is, accepted propositions are part of the mutual belief in the common ground, whereas rejections are not added to the common ground (Walker, 1996). Nevertheless, a question arises with respect to this inference; namely, how do we understand that default rule with respect to the analysis of type Figure (1b)? More specifically, what are the primary cues the supervisor might use in identifying *no, sí* as *rejection* in (1b), and as *implicit acceptance* in (1c)? The main difference is in the implications arising from  $\alpha$ . The form of the antecedent (how information is requested/asserted) and the content of the speaker's utterance (what it is requested/asserted) are essential in order to infer rejection/acceptance. Again, *no, sí* is going beyond the literal propositional content of the utterance, particularly regarding the cognitive states of the conversants. Another difference is found in the prosodic realization in both cases.<sup>11</sup> A descending contour for cases like (1c) contrasts with the descending-ascending tone in cases like (1b).

#### 4.0. Summary

To summarize, we illustrate in Table 3 the potential conversational strategies identified in this analysis, derived from the discourse structures diagrammed in Figure 1 and discussed in section 3. These strategies are based on the inferences made by both participants, and are consistent with the use of the *no, sí* particle in the dialogues collected from our corpus.

Table 3  
Conversational strategies that involve *no, sí* variants

Uses	Offer Alternatives (AltQ)	Rejection (Neg Q)	Acceptance (NonQ/Internal)
<i>No-sí</i>	+		
<i>No, sí</i>		+	+

TABLE-3: Conversational strategies that involve *no, sí* variants

In the second installment of our two-part analysis of *no, sí* (forthcoming), we examine a second dimension of our pragmatic analysis, which addresses the issue of *politeness*, Goffman's (1981) ideas on *footing*, and notions of preferred and dispreferred answers in conversational interaction.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> An abbreviated comprehensive account of the discourse relations and issues of politeness involved in the use of *no*, *sí* was presented at the International Conference on the Semantics and Pragmatics of Spanish, held at the Ohio State University in November 1999 and is currently under review for publication.

<sup>2</sup> We would like to acknowledge the aid of the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Culture and the United States' Universities, subvention #1490, whose support of Prof. Vann's doctoral research allowed him to gather the data on which much of this investigation is based.

<sup>3</sup> At first glance similar to *no*, *sí*, this response is actually quite different, both semantically and pragmatically, from the particle we investigate here. Because an analysis of exactly how *sí*, *no* is substantially different from *no*, *sí* falls outside the scope of the present study, we will not consider it further here.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that, though throughout the paper we use the notation (X) to represent an informant, it is not always the same informant; these conversational excerpts come from interviews with several different informants.

<sup>5</sup> As an anonymous JoP reviewer insightfully pointed out to us, *no* illustrates a "polarity reversal" or "expectation contravention" along the lines exposed in (Michaelis, 1994). We subsume these notions under the Contrast relation at the level of discourse structure.

<sup>6</sup> In such a case, there is clearly an update mechanism of the Common Ground or conversational record. It illustrates that conversants are adding or removing information in order to coordinate what is in the common ground during dialogue processing (Thomason, 1990, Stalnaker, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> According to Horn (1989), this would be an "implicit denial", where the addressee denies a presupposition of S's; and an "epistemic rejection" following Walker (1996), where the default rules of epistemic inference have the same logical status as implicatures.

<sup>8</sup> We cannot establish the same logical relations between the propositions expressed by the utterances in (6)-(9), since all of them have different logical conditions. For instance, the example in (7) might be exemplified by the following schema:

(8) I: **Bel<sub>I</sub>(Bel<sub>X</sub>(Q ∨ Bel<sub>X</sub>(~P))**  
X: **~(Bel<sub>X</sub>(~P)) & Bel<sub>X</sub>(P)**

In (8), I assumes that X believes that being born in Catalonia is either number four, or it is not even important. The informant again is denying this assumption, making clear by *sí* that he does believe that being born in Catalonia and considering oneself a Catalan are important.

<sup>9</sup> An anonymous JoP reviewer points out that the acceptance/common ground reading is supported by the epistemic attenuation that the *no-sí* response conveys here, which implies less affirmation.

<sup>10</sup> See Koike (1993) and Koike (1998) for a recent approach to *suggestions* in Spanish, following Brown & Levinson's model of politeness.



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<sup>11</sup> This might be an important issue, not only with respect the difference between type (1b) and (1c), but also for the consequences of the intonational contour of *no*, *sí* for the meaning of this particle. Moreover, as an anonymous JoP reviewer did put forward to us, the difference in the prosodic realization may have implications for the degree of grammaticalization (or pragmaticalization) of *no*, *sí*. This is a matter for a future research.