



Discourse markers, interlanguage level and social integration: The immigrant learners in the Naples area

Patrizia Giuliano, Rosa Russo, Simona Anastasio

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This volume employs a range of empirical methodologies – including eye-tracking, direct observation, qualitative research and corpus analysis – to describe the use of discourse markers in second language acquisition. The variety of different approaches used by the contributors facilitates the observation of correlations between morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of discourse markers and enriches our understanding of the cognitive behaviour of L2 speakers, both in the understanding and production of texts. Some of the essays examine the acquisitional paths of discourse markers in instructional and natural contexts, with a particular focus on situations of language contact and social integration; others describe experimental studies that analyse the cognitive processing of discourse markers in L2 learners. All the contributions aim to offer new insights which will expand and develop existing theoretical claims about this area of study and open up avenues for further research.

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Cognitive Insights into Discourse Markers
and Second Language Acquisition

Iria Bello et al (eds)

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Iria Bello, Carolina Bernales,
Maria Vittoria Calvi and Elena Landone (eds)

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PATRIZIA GIULIANO, ROSA RUSSO AND SIMONA ANASTASIO

9 Discourse markers, interlanguage level and social integration: The immigrant learners in the Naples area¹

Introduction

In the present work, we analyse the types and functions of discourse markers in the dialogic and narrative speech of immigrant learners in the area of Naples (Southern Italy). The informants have different interlanguage levels and source languages and mostly learned Italian in a natural environment. In agreement with their different levels and types of acquisition (natural and/or tutored), we aim at identifying the different levels that our learners reached in the use of discourse markers.

The interviews that we conducted were semi-structured in the sense that the Italian interviewers prepared a battery of questions and narrative topics, but the interviewees were not previously informed about them. We also interviewed a group of native Italian speakers (reference group) using this same modality.

In our theoretical framework, discourse markers are seen as crucial for the construction of coherence and the processing of textual information in spontaneous communication. So, a socially well-integrated

¹ Patrizia Giuliano wrote the chapter. All three authors, nevertheless, contributed to the analysis of the data used for the study, in particular, Giuliano analysed the data produced by the Italian informants, Anastasio studied the data of Polish learners and Russo focused her attention on the productions of Ukrainian, Senegalese and Sinhalese learners.

individual will have learned to manage and use discourse markers in his daily communication.

With respect to the classification that we adopted for discourse markers, which divides them into interaction markers and meta-textual markers, we shall demonstrate that the latter ones are particularly frequent in the interviews of advanced learners with plans to stay in Italy long term but less used by advanced informants not having this type of plan and by those with a lower interlanguage level. Moreover, in these last two groups, the meta-textual markers can be used in a non-native way. For all groups, the interaction markers are more frequent than the meta-textual ones.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, lower frequency and non-native use of discourse markers are strictly connected to the desire of going back to their own country and to a greater or lesser integration in the Italian community, even when the interviewees have been living in Italy for many years. A further result lies in the higher percentage of discourse markers with inferential functions in the interviews of less advanced informants. As a final observation, it is possible to hypothesize an implicational scale in the emergence of the functions that we can attribute to each discourse marker.

Previous studies and research goals

During the acquisition of a foreign language (L2), in order to create a successful linguistic interaction with the native community of speakers, a learner has to master not only the *sentence grammar* but the *discourse grammar* as well. In the functionalist framework, the latter has been depicted in more or less restricted terms: for some authors it is concerned with the way native speakers package and shape information while producing a text in a specific context (the 'rhetorical' styles of a language according to Slobin 1987, 1996, 2003, 2004; for this view, cf. also, among other works, von Stutterheim and Klein, 2002; von Stutterheim *et al.*, 2002, 2003; Carroll and von Stutterheim, 2003; von Stutterheim and Nüse, 2003).

Carroll *et al.*, 2004; Carroll and Lambert 2005, 2006; Von Stutterheim and Carroll, 2006; Carroll *et al.*, 2008); for others, it is necessary to more extensively consider the intentions of the speaker and the different manners of interacting in a specific context while producing a given type of text in a determined community of speakers (cf. Giuliano and Di Maio 2008; Giuliano 2012; Giuliano and Musto in preparation). Discourse grammars can vary according to the textual genre to produce (dialogue, narration, description, etc.): even though textual and interactive mechanisms are on the whole universal (conversational strategies, anaphoric devices, deixis, etc.; cf. Grice, 1975, 1989), the way of realizing them is *language specific*. So, it is possible to state that an L2 learner needs to master the discourse grammar (or better grammars) in order for its communication to be successful.

Inside this type of grammars, the employment of discourse markers (henceforth DMs) is crucial and frequent but also variable across languages (cf. Engl. *so, well, why*, etc.; It. *quindi* [so], *allora* [so, then], *praticamente* [practically, actually], etc.). So, in our opinion, a learner who employs DMs is certainly an individual having intense contacts with the native community of speakers of a given language. The semantics and syntax of DMs is, however, neither obvious nor simple to learn for a foreign speaker, since they are strictly connected to the context of employment, as shown by the Italian use of *allora* (and its different translation in English) in the following examples:

- (1) A: ma è vero che non vuoi venire alla festa di Cinzia?
B: *allora* io non ho mai detto che non voglio venire ma solo che forse non potrò!
[A: But is it true that you don't want to come to Cinzia's party?
B: *Well* I've never said that I don't want to come but only that maybe I won't be able!]
- (2) Lavoravo dieci ore al giorno per neanche mille euro al mese *e allora* ho deciso di licenziarmi
[I worked ten hours a day for not even one thousand euros a month *so* I decided to quit.]

In example (1), the function of *allora* is that of a change of turn in a conversation (cf. Engl. *well*); in example (2), the same item marks instead

an inferential function² (cf. Engl. *so*). The different translation of *allora* into English clearly shows the crosslinguistic variation of this type of means.

As Nigoević and Sučić observe,

La funzione principale dei segnali discorsivi è collocare un certo enunciato nel contesto linguistico e extralinguistico. La loro funzione è emotiva, espressiva ... all'interlocutore offrono l'informazione sul co(n)testo in cui viene pronunciato un enunciato e gli permettono di classificarlo pragmaticamente. (Nigoević and Sučić, 2011: 95)³

So, the mastery of DMs is not an easy task since it demands a deep knowledge of the communicative processes in L2. As Borreguero Zuloaga puts it,

Su contribución semántica no reside fundamentalmente en su contenido conceptual o en su función gramatical, sino en su capacidad de guiar las inferencias del intérprete en el procesamiento de la información textual y de gestionar la interacción que se basa en su sucederse de actos lingüísticos. (Borreguero Zuloaga 2015: 153)⁴

Despite the crucial role that DMs play in languages, for Italian most of the available studies focus on the native variety (cf. the crucial work by Bazzanella 1995).⁵ So DMs have not received much attention in the studies about Italian as L2 (cf. nevertheless, Nigoević and Sučić 2011; Andorno 2007, 2008). Furthermore, in the institutional teaching of an

² For an overview of the functions of Italian DM, cf. Bazzanella (1995).

³ The main function of DMs is to locate a given utterance in a given linguistic and extra-linguistic context. Their function is emotional, expressive ... they offer the listener information about the co(n)text where an utterance is pronounced and let him pragmatically classify it (our translation).

⁴ Its semantic contribution [of a DM] does not fundamentally lie in its conceptual content or grammatical function, but in its capacity of guiding the inferences of an interpreter in the processing of textual information and of managing the interaction, which is based on a sequence of speech acts (our translation).

⁵ We support Bazzanella's framework and by virtue of that we shall consider DMs as elements typical of oral interaction whose function is to regulate the turn taking and the relationship between interlocutors (for a discussion of the various definitions of DM across studies, cf. for instance Borreguero Zuloaga, 2015).

L2, the practice of these items is neglected if not completely omitted (also see the discussion on other markers in Chapters 2, 3 and 4), despite the fact that in spontaneous communication DMs are crucial for the construction of the textual and dialogical coherence.

For the reasons just mentioned and with respect to the present study, we hypothesize that an individual well integrated into a foreign community will have surely learned – at least partially – to master and use DMs in his daily speech. On the basis of this hypothesis, we propose an analysis of the DMs employed by different groups of L2 learners of Italian (interactions and narrations with Italian native listeners), who have all immigrated to the area of Naples, the biggest city in Southern Italy. The analysis will consider the relationship between several variables: the L2 level reached by the learners, the type of DM that they employ, the functions that they apply to them and their socio-biographical profiles. By doing so, we shall show that the lexically varied use of DMs and their functionally correct employment is directly related not only to the linguistic competence in L2 but also to the different personal aspirations of the informants concerning the target country.

Following the research objectives described above, we hope to contribute to the study of DMs in a new and more exhaustive manner with respect to the already available works on the acquisition of the Italian language as L2 in natural environment.

Methodology

Our study is based on an investigation that took place in Naples, a city that has had a high immigration rate in the last 20 years. We interviewed four groups of learners with different native languages (Ukrainian, Sinhalese, Pular, Wolof and Polish) and a group of Italian native speakers. All the informants live or come from the area of Naples.⁶

⁶ The Polish subjects (11) have been staying in Naples from a minimum of eight years to a maximum of 19; their education ranges from a high school diploma to a university

Among the learners, the Senegalese, Polish, and Ukrainian subjects have a high or very high proficiency in Italian (C1/C2 competence according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), whereas most of the Sinhalese informants have a level just slightly higher than basic, with which they can satisfy only some essential communicative needs (cf. Klein and Perdue 1992, 1997).⁷

The interviews were based on a long conversation during which the interviewers asked questions about a large variety of topics (personal life, job, friends, hobbies, etc.). The questions were the same for all the learners but partly different with respect to the ones posed to the Italian speakers. All the interviews also involved the production of biographical narrations, the topics of which varied according to the informant.

All the data were transcribed by CHAT (MacWhinney 2000) and analysed using the two perspectives commented on above:

degree (for the latter three out of the 11 subjects); all of them had already studied at least another foreign language before coming to Italy (normally Russian); most of the subjects (8) have learned Italian in a spontaneous way; eight out of 11 have (or had) an Italian partner. For Ukrainians (10 informants), they have spent in Italy from 7 to 15 years; four out of ten have a university diploma; almost all of them studied Russian, one also studied French; just two people followed an Italian language course; three informants have an Italian partner. The Senegalese informants (3) have Italian partners; they have been staying in Italy from 11 to 15 years and have a university degree; they learned Italian language both in tutored and untutored way; their other L2s: French and Wolof. Concerning the Sinhalese group (3 subjects), they have been staying in Italy from ten to 15 years; all of them attended an Italian language course and just one also knows English; none of them has an Italian partner. As for the Italian group, all of them have a level of education from medium (high school diploma) to high (university degree) and come from the Naples area.

- 7 As Klein and Perdue (1992, 1997) have demonstrated, the acquisition of an L2 in a natural environment can involve the creation of a 'basic variety', that is to say an acquisitional stage essentially deprived of L2 inflectional morphology and syntax. In this variety, semantic and syntactic principles such as *focus last* and *controller first* compensate – as far as possible – the absence of grammatical principles. Now, some of our Sri Lankan learners have just a bit more than a basic competence. With respect to the European Framework for Languages the basic variety is not easy to be placed, since it satisfies some communicative needs (A2 / B1 levels) though *in absentia* of the very specific L2 grammar.

- A socio-biographical perspective: are the possible different use and types of DMs linked to the socio-biographical variables of the learner groups investigated?
- An interlanguage perspective: is there any relationship between the function and form of the DMs employed by the learners and their levels in L2?

Data analysis and results

Linguistic competence and socio-biographical variables

As Figure 9.1 shows, the stay in Italy of the L2 learners is always long term; but their proficiency in Italian is not necessarily high, as is the case for most of the Sinhalese speakers. The following histogram shows the correlation between the linguistic competence of our learner groups and the four biographical variables that mostly influence it.

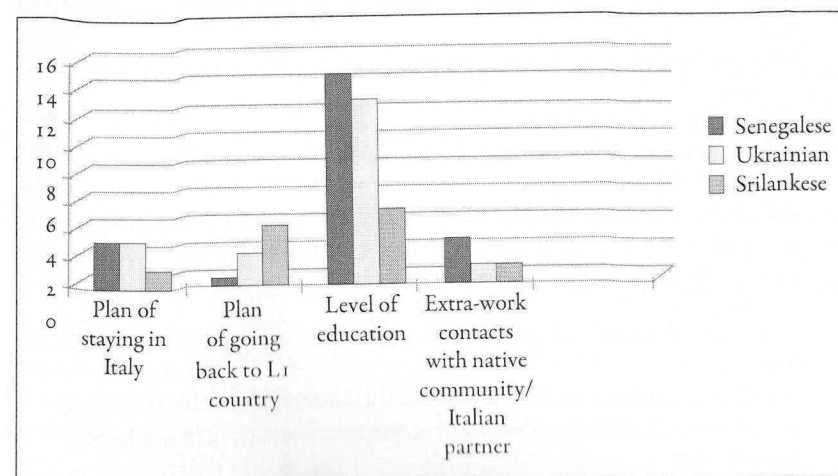


Figure 9.1. Linguistic competence and biographical variables

As Figure 9.1 illustrates, the variables which mostly correlate with an advanced language level are: education level, extra-work contacts with the native community and/or the fact of having an Italian partner, and long term plans for staying in Italy. Two of the most influential variables detected, namely contacts with the Italian community and the fact of having an Italian partner, necessarily involve a good integration in the native community.

Discourse markers: Percentage and functional evaluations

Our most proficient groups of informants, namely the Polish, Ukrainian and Senegalese ones, employ a relevant quantity of DMs, which are different from each other for the variety of functions that each of them can take on. Here is an extract from the interview of one of our Senegalese subjects:

(3) Pierre, Senegalese

@EXP: senti mi vuoi raccontare del tuo viaggio per arrivare in Italia?

@SUJ: *guarda* # è stato molto semplice # mh già sapevo quando venire perché tutto era preparato
ho avuto il visto facilmente perché venivo come studente e c'è un po' di agevolazione per quanto riguarda *diciamo* le pratiche ...

@EXP: e magari non so non avevi il timore comunque di trovarti male in un Paese totalmente diverso poi dal tuo?

@SUJ: mh no no no più nel lato mh le apprensioni sono più legato *magari* non riuscissi a fare gli esami per la lingua perché *cioè* non capivo benissimo l'italiano *no?* ...

@SUJ: *allora* quando sono arrivato in Italia da Roma sono sceso ... e ho incontrato un agente ... e

lui ha detto di solito i senegalesi non vengono qua a studiare # *allora* già a primo impatto ...

@EXP: vuoi parlarmi un po' della tua famiglia in Senegal?

@SUJ: sì una famiglia molto modesta ... poi man mano più o meno ha raggiunto una certa # un

certo benessere *cioè no giustamente* non è non è grazie a me non è grazie a me è grazie anche

i miei fratelli e le mie sorelle che hanno lavorato e continuano a lavorare in Senegal ... e *comunque*
stanno mandando avanti la casa ... accogliamo sempre anche gente che non è della famiglia stretta
come si dice # cugini amici

[@EXP: Listen can you tell me about your journey to Italy?

@SUJ: *look* # it was very simple # mh I already knew when to come because everything was ready I easily got my visa because I was coming as a student and it's easier to get this type of visa of *let's say* the procedure

@EXP: And probably I don't know weren't you afraid however of living badly in a country completely different from yours?

@SUJ: mh no no no more with respect to +// mh the apprehensions were more concerned with *maybe* I wouldn't be able to take exams because of the language I *mean* I didn't understand Italian very well *no?*

@SUJ: *well* when I arrived in Italy I got off in Rome ... and I met a policeman ... and he said generally the Senegalese don't come here to study # *so* already during the first impact ...

@EXP: can you tell me a bit about your family in Senegal?

@SUJ: yes a very modest family ... then it has slowly more or less reached a certain # a certain wealth *well no I mean* it's not it's not thanks to me it's thanks also to my brothers and my sisters who worked and continue to work in Senegal ... and *however* they're keeping the family going ... we also always host people who are not from the immediate family *how you say* # cousins friends]

The passage contains several types of DMs: modulation mechanisms (*diciamo*: [let's say], *comunque*: [however], *magari*: [may be] in the context in question), turn-taking strategies (*guarda*: [look], *allora*: [well] in *allora quando sono arrivato in Italia* ...), request for confirmation (*no?*), self-reformulations (*cioè*: [I mean], *come si dice*: [how you say]), inferential function (*allora*: [so] in *allora già a primo impatto*). As *allora* shows, the same item can have different functions (in our example those of *well* and *so*). Conversely, a combination of several items can have just one meaning, as what happens with *cioè no giustamente* ([I mean no well]) having altogether a self-reformulation function.

Table 9.1 illustrates the type and frequency of DM in the Senegalese group (for demarcative and focus means, cf. examples *infra* from other groups).

Table 9.1. The Senegalese group: Dialogues⁸

Interactive functions: Dialogues	
Acceptation markings / Request for Confirmation (<i>No?</i> , <i>eh?</i> , <i>ti pare?</i> , <i>non è così?</i> , <i>esatto</i> , <i>ecco</i> , <i>giusto</i> , <i>certo</i>)	30 (14%)
Request of Attention and Verification of Correct Reception (<i>capisci?</i> , <i>sai/lo sapete</i> , <i>capito? eh?</i>)	19 (9%)
Modulations Mechanisms (<i>in qualche modo</i> , <i>praticamente</i> , <i>diciamo</i> , <i>veramente</i> , <i>proprio</i> / <i>davvero</i> , <i>magari</i> , <i>insomma</i> , <i>penso io</i>)	43 (19%)
Pause fillers (<i>Eh</i> , <i>mh</i> , <i>cioè</i> , <i>non so</i> , <i>come (posso) dire</i> , <i>come si dice</i> , <i>diciamo</i>)	91 (41%)
Turn takings markings (<i>Allora</i> / <i>ecco</i> / <i>vabbé</i> , <i>guarda</i>)	38 (17%)
Total	220 (57%)
Metatextual functions: Dialogues	
Demarcative means (<i>Insomma</i> , <i>sentì</i> , <i>a proposito</i> , <i>comunque</i>)	57 (38%)
Focalizers (<i>Ma</i> , <i>sì</i> , <i>dico</i> / <i>voglio dire</i> , <i>proprio</i> / <i>appunto</i> , <i>ecco</i>)	19 (13%)
Reformulators (<i>Cioè</i> , <i>diciamo</i> , <i>anzi</i> , <i>insomma</i> , <i>non so</i> , <i>mettiamo/ prendiamo</i>)	73 (50%)
Total	149 (49%)
Inferential functions: Dialogues (<i>quindi</i> / <i>allora</i>)	14 (4%)

The interactive and meta-textual functions of DMs are very frequent in the interviews of the Senegalese subjects, who employ all the items in question in a native-like way and whose Italian sounds native-like except for the

8 *No?* [no?], *eh?* [isn't it?], etc., *ti pare?* [don't you think so?], *non è così?* [isn't it?], etc., *esatto* [exactly], *ecco* [well], *giusto* [right], *certo* [definitively], *capisci?* [you understand?], *sai/lo sapete* [you know], *capito?* [understood?], *eh?* [isn't it?], etc., *in qualche modo* [in a way], *praticamente* [practically], *diciamo* [let's say], *veramente* [really], *proprio* / *davvero* [actually], *magari* [maybe], *insomma* [in short], *penso io* [I think], *Eh*, *mh*, *cioè* [I mean], *non so* [I don't know], *come (posso) dire* [how can I say], *come si dice* [how do you say], *diciamo* [let's say], *Allora* / *ecco* / *vabbé*: [well], *guarda* [look], *insomma* [in short], *sentì* [listen], *a proposito* [actually], *comunque* [however], *ma* [but], *sì* [emphatic use of do], *dico* / *voglio dire* [I mean], *proprio* / *appunto* [actually], *ecco* [well], *Cioè* [I mean], *diciamo* [let's say], *anzi* [rather], *insomma* [in short], *non so* [I don't know], *mettiamo/prendiamo* [let's suppose], *quindi* / *allora* [so].

prosodic aspects. So this group seems not to have problems with both the mastery of the communication processes (interactive functions) and the organization of the text that they are producing (meta-textual functions).

In the interviews of the Ukrainian subjects, the DMs are conspicuous as well and also varied with respect to the functions that they take on.

(4) Lesia, Ukrainian

@EXP: Mi racconti un po' com'è nata l'idea di partire dal tuo paese?

@SUJ: *allora* l'idea di partire dal mio paese era *diciamo* che //+ in realtà io ho studiato e poi
ho lavorato come infermiere in un ospedale solo che c'era un periodo che non non pagavano gli
stipendi e poi c'era [/] c'erano molti problemi ...
certo dipendere dai genitori poi pure loro *non è che* avevano una possibilità +//...
quindi io ho pensato anche se *non è che* c'era *proprio* questa necessità ...

[@EXP: can you tell me a bit how your idea of leaving your country was born?

@SUJ: *well* the idea of leaving my country was *let's say* that //+ in reality I studied and then
I worked as a male nurse in a hospital but there was a period where they didn't didn't pay the
salaries and then there was [/] there were many problems ...
certainly to depend on your parents then they too *it's not that* they had the possibility of +// (= they didn't really have the possibility of supporting me) ...
so I thought [to leave] even though *it's not that* there was a real necessity (= it was not really necessary)]

In the passage by the Ukrainian informant, we find turn-taking devices (*allora*: [well]), reformulators (*diciamo*: [let's say]), demarcative means⁹ (*certo*: [well] in the context above) and a structurally complex DMs, namely *non è che*, whose function is to focus a string of the utterance produced (meta-textual function). Tables 9.2 and 9.3 illustrate the DMs used by the Ukrainian subjects.

Concerning the Sinhalese subjects, we divided these subjects in two subgroups because of their different levels in Italian: the advanced subgroup

9 Demarcative means mark the beginning or end of a linguistic chunk.

and the basic subgroup. On the whole, both subgroups employ lexically less varied DMs. Furthermore, the functions that the basic learners assign to them are not always clear, as shown in the following extract:

Table 9.2. The Ukrainian group: Narrations¹⁰

Interactive function: Narrations	
Acceptation markings / Request for Confirmation (<i>No?, eh?, ti pare?, non è così?, esatto, ecco, giusto, certo</i>)	30 (8%)
Request of Attention and Verification of Correct Reception (<i>capisci?, sai/lo sapete, capito? eh?</i>)	76 (20%)
Modulations Mechanisms (<i>in qualche modo, praticamente, diciamo, veramente, proprio / davvero, magari, insomma, penso io</i>)	128 (35%)
Pause fillers (<i>Eh, mh, cioè, non so, come (posso) dire, come si dice, diciamo</i>)	88 (24%)
Turn takings markings (<i>Allora / ecco / vabbé, guarda</i>)	40 (11%)
Total	362 (65%)
Metatextual functions: Narrations	
Demarcative means (<i>Insomma, senti, a proposito, comunque</i>)	64 (38%)
Focalizers (<i>Ma, sì, dico / voglio dire, proprio / appunto, ecco</i>)	49 (29%)
Reformulators (<i>Cioè, diciamo, anzi, insomma, non so, mettiamo/ prendiamo</i>)	53 (32%)
Total	166 (30%)
Inferential functions: Narrations (<i>quindi / allora</i>)	29 (5%)

Table 9.3. The Ukrainian group: Dialogues¹¹

Interactive functions: Dialogues	
Acceptation markings / Request for Confirmation (<i>No?, eh?, ti pare?, non è così?, esatto, ecco, giusto, certo</i>)	21 (21%)
Request of Attention and Verification of Correct Reception (<i>capisci?, sai/lo sapete, capito? eh?</i>)	—

¹⁰ For English translations of Italian DM cf. gloss 8.

¹¹ For English translations of Italian DM cf. gloss 8.

Table 9.3. (Continued)

Modulations Mechanisms (<i>in qualche modo, praticamente, diciamo, veramente, proprio / davvero, magari, insomma, penso io</i>)	41 (41%)
Pause fillers (<i>Eh, mh, cioè, non so, come (posso) dire, come si dice, diciamo</i>)	37 (37%)
Turn takings markings (<i>Allora / ecco / vabbé, guarda</i>)	1 (1%)
Total	101 (65.1%)
Metatextual functions: Dialogues	
Demarcative means (<i>Insomma, senti, a proposito, comunque</i>)	23 (43.3%)
Focalizers (<i>Ma, sì, dico / voglio dire, proprio / appunto, ecco</i>)	14 (26.4%)
Reformulators (<i>Cioè, diciamo, anzi, insomma, non so, mettiamo/ prendiamo</i>)	16 (30%)
Total	53 (34.1%)
Inferential functions: Dialogues (<i>quindi / allora</i>)	1 (0.6%)

(5) Marion, Sri Lankan

@EXP: e dove stai lavorando?

@SUJ: lavoro mh # Portici ... lava macchine *poi* venuta prima mattina oggi adesso finito lavoro poi domani mattina andare ...

[@EXP: and where are you working?

[work.1st.S mh # Portici [a small town close to Naples] washes cars *then* come PP.F early morning today now finished work *then* tomorrow morning to-go ...]

@SUJ: I work in Portici I wash cars *then* I came here early in the morning today. Now I've finished my work then tomorrow I'll go again]

The linguistic level (concerning production) of Marion is evidently low. Furthermore, the function by which she employs *poi* in *poi venuta di prima mattina* is not clear at all.

Let's observe a different extract from another basic Sri Lankan speaker:

(6) Sunjeev, Sri Lankan

@SUJ: ... qualche volta carabinieri pure controllato a me che hanno detto 'permesso di soggiorno?' io detto 'io non c'è permesso di soggiorno ... però Hanno mi liberato non è detto niente ... se vai in Germania loro mandano

via subito! **Guarda** come fatto carabinieri che ha detto 'vai a casa non girare la notte' perché io stava andando da mio fratello

[@SUJ: sometimes policeman also checked to me that have.PL said greencard?' I said.PP 'I not there's greencard' but have.1st.PL me set.free.PP not is said.PP nothing ... if go.2nd.S Germany they send away immediately! *Look* how done policemen who has said 'go to home don't go around the night' because I was going to my brother's]

Sunjeev's interlanguage is more advanced than that of Marion, although still quite basic. Despite that, the function of the DM *guarda* – that Italian speakers use as request of attention – sounds slightly ambiguous, since it should go along with an adversative DM (cf. our English paraphrases of the extract: *conversely look at the way* they behaved with me ...).

In general, the Sri Lankan subgroups show a low attention for metatextual functions (global organization of the text that they are producing) but a frequent employment of inferential markings such as *quindi* and *allora*, which are among the most used by Italian native speakers. In other words, these subjects have problems with identifying the more pragmatically connotated functions of DMs. The following extract comes from one of the more advanced subjects and illustrates the use of inferential *quindi*:

(7) Susante, Sri Lankan

io non lo so parlare napoletano però qualche parola # però quando loro parlano capisco perché sono sempre qua dentro dei Quartieri Spagnoli *quindi* loro parlano e io capisco # però io non lo so parlare napoletano ... no tutti parola io conosco # e loro quando parlano napoletano subito subito parlano *quindi* non capisco

[I cannot speak Neapolitan but [just] some words # but when they speak I understand because I'm always in the Spanish Quarters¹² so they speak and I understand # but I cannot speak Neapolitan ... I don't know all the words # and when they speak Neapolitan ... they speak very quickly so I don't understand]

12 The Spanish Quarters are one of the lower class quarters in Naples in which the Neapolitan dialect is very much spoken.

Table 9.4. The Srilankese basic group: Dialogues¹³

Interactive functions: Dialogues	
Acceptation markings / Request for Confirmation (<i>No?, eh?, ti pare?, non è così?, esatto, ecco, giusto, certo</i>)	4 (1%)
Request of Attention and Verification of Correct Reception (<i>capisci?, sai/lo sapete, capito? eh?</i>)	35 (23%)
Modulations Mechanisms (<i>in qualche modo, praticamente, diciamo, veramente, proprio / davvero, magari, insomma, penso io</i>)	19 (12%)
Pause fillers (<i>Eh, mh, cioè, non so, come (posso) dire, come si dice, diciamo</i>)	88 (60%)
Turn takings markings (<i>Allora / ecco / vabbé, guarda</i>)	8 (4%)
Total	146 (86.4%)
Metatextual functions: Dialogues	
Demarcative means (<i>Insomma, senti, a proposito, comunque</i>)	11 (6.5%)
Focalizers (<i>Ma, sì, dico / voglio dire, proprio / appunto, ecco</i>)	2 (1.2%)
Reformulators (<i>Cioè, diciamo, anzi, insomma, non so, mettiamo/ prendiamo</i>)	4 (2.3%)
Total	17 (10%)
Inferential functions: Dialogues (<i>quindi / allora</i>)	6 (4%)

Table 9.5. The Srilankese advanced group: Dialogues¹⁴

Interactive Functions: Dialogues	
Acceptation markings / Request for Confirmation (<i>No?, eh?, ti pare?, non è così?, esatto, ecco, giusto, certo</i>)	1 (4%)
Request of Attention and Verification of Correct Reception (<i>capisci?, sai/lo sapete, capito? eh?</i>)	1 (4%)
Modulations Mechanisms (<i>in qualche modo, praticamente, diciamo, veramente, proprio / davvero, magari, insomma, penso io</i>)	0
Pause fillers (<i>Eh, mh, cioè, non so, come (posso) dire, come si dice, diciamo</i>)	5 (20%)
Turn takings markings (<i>Allora / ecco / vabbé, guarda</i>)	18 (72%)
Total	25 (17.9%)

(Continued)

13 For English translations of Italian DM cf. gloss 7.

14 For English translations of Italian DM cf. gloss 7.

Table 9.5. (Continued)

Metatextual functions: Dialogues	
Demarcative means (<i>Insomma, senti, a proposito, comunque</i>)	18 (64.2%)
Focalizers (<i>Ma, sì, dico / voglio dire, proprio / appunto, ecco</i>)	5 (17.9%)
Reformulators (<i>Cioè, diciamo, anzi, insomma, non so, mettiamo/ prendiamo</i>)	5 (17.9%)
Total	28 (20%)
Inferential functions: Dialogues (<i>quindi / allora</i>)	87 (62.1%)

Among the four groups of learners that we interviewed, the Polish one is definitively the closest to the Italian reference group, as Table 9.6 clearly illustrates.

Table 9.6. Native Italian speakers vs Polish learners

Dialogues	Italian	Polish
Interactive functions	285 (62%)	219 (56.5%)
Metatextual functions	143 (31%)	147 (37.5%)
Inferential functions	30 (7%)	23 (6%)
Narrations		
Interactive functions	139 (53%)	44 (50.6%)
Metatextual functions	122 (47%)	35 (40.2%)
Inferential functions	—	8 (9.2%)

The Italian L2 of Polish subjects is definitively very close to the Italian native productions except for – as the table shows – the presence of inferential markings.

Discussion

Interactional and meta-textual DMs

The interactional functions of DMs frequently show up both in narrations and dialogues, which differs from the meta-textual functions that, at least

theoretically, should mostly appear in narrations because of the less interactive aspect of this task.

In the Polish, Ukrainian and Senegalese groups, the interactional DMs are always more frequent than the meta-textual ones in both the textual genres considered (cf. Tables 9.1, 9.2, 9.3 and 9.6); nevertheless, for the Senegalese subjects, the two categories of DMs are more balanced (57% *vs* 49%), which shows the possibility for meta-textual DMs to be very much employed even in interactive tasks when the learners' level in L2 is very high. For the Sri Lankan informants, the meta-textual DMs are scarcer than in all the other groups (cf. Tables 9.4 and 9.5).

These results are to be interpreted using the different aims that the two types of DMs have: *the interactive function is certainly primary* for learners in a natural environment since it makes a message effective; the meta-textual function aims at making what a speaker utters as coherent and cohesive as possible, which theoretically is not less important, but it can be less important for learners with a lower linguistic competence in L2, as their utterances tend to be shorter and less organized in textual (namely global) terms.

With respect to the Sri Lankans – who very rarely exploit meta-textual devices – the results concerning them cannot simply be explained by the lack of narrations for these subjects since the meta-textual markers are numerous for the Senegalese group despite the lack of narrations for the latter as well.

Inferential Markings

The percentage of the inferential DMs is particularly relevant for the Sri Lankan speakers (cf. Tables 9.4 and 9.5), who often use markings such as *quindi* and *dunque*. The function of these items is essentially *inferential*, so in contrast with other DMs that can take on several meanings according to the co(n)texts, *quindi* and *dunque* are semantically and pragmatically *more stable*. This could make them *more transparent*, which is different from DMs having a large range of functions.

As a result of what we have just observed, the low attention that our Sri Lankan subjects seem to pay to the functional domain of other DMs is probably due to their greater variability. In order, for a learner to grasp all the nuances of DMs, they need a constant and *deeply motivated interaction*

with the native community; an interaction that the Sri Lankan speakers do not have. If this is the case, further studies could explore the possibility for acquisition of DMs in Italian (or other L2 languages) to appear according to an implicational scale based on their greater or lesser semantic and pragmatic transparency.

Linguistic results and socio-biographical variables

In the previous two paragraphs, we explained our results with respect to our four groups of learners by virtue of their interlanguage level, the pragmatic transparency or functional usefulness of DMs, and the type of textual genre analysed. These linguistic and paralinguistic motivations need, nevertheless, to be integrated with sociolinguistic factors.

As expected, our data show that a higher interlinguistic level goes along with a larger lexicon of the items in question and a greater appropriateness with respect to the co(n)text. This apparently obvious result becomes more significant when it is correlated with some socio-biographical variables, in particular the *plan of staying in Italy definitively*.

The Senegalese and Polish groups are made up of individuals having Italian partners and almost always plan to stay in Italy indefinitely. The Ukrainian subjects, even though rather integrated in the local Italian native community, often have middle term plans; the Sri Lankan group, despite their long or very long sojourn in Italy, do not have Italian partners and always plan to go back to their country, even when they are socially integrated.

Now, with respect to the employment of DMs, they are varied and sound native-like just in the linguistic productions of the Polish and Senegalese subjects.

Conclusions

In the present work, we analysed the types and functions of DMs in the dialogic and narrative speech of immigrant learners in the area of Naples. Our groups of learners had different interlanguage levels and source languages

and mostly learned Italian in a natural environment. We presented them with two different types of tasks, dialogues and narrations, and compared the results from them with those produced by a group of native speakers of Italian. The comparison brought us to some interesting considerations of both linguistic and sociolinguistic nature.

From the viewpoint of the interlanguage theory, the employment of DM by our learners is clearly connected with the level of competence in L2: the higher the latter is, the more correct and more varied the use of DMs. This apparently obvious result is nevertheless less clear for the Sinhalese subjects. In this group, some of the informants have a low level of competence; but higher levels are not lacking, and yet the interactive and meta-textual DMs are much less frequent than for other groups of learners¹⁵. In contrast with these results, the inferential markings are particularly frequent in the texts of the Sri Lankans.

If the interlanguage level cannot explain this state of affairs for the Sri Lankans, the correlation of the results with some socio-biographical variables – in particular, the lack of intention to remain in Italy indefinitely – seems to explain most of it. The linguistic motivations are not to be completely excluded, since the semantic stability of some DMs could also play a role; rather, they must be integrated with extra-linguistic factors, a type of factors that are sometimes, incomprehensibly, left out in L2 studies.

Acronyms, abbreviations and symbols

- #: short empty pause
- ##: long empty pause
- [//]: self-correction
- +//: self-interruption
- ...: cancellation of a passage
- *EXP: interviewer

15 There seems to be no reason from the L1 which could justify this result (Chandralal 2010).

*SUJ: informant
 1st: first person
 2nd: second person
 Discourse Markers: DM
 F: female
 Foreign Language: FL
 Foreign Language Acquisition: FLA
 mh: filled pause
 Mother tongue or first language: L1
 PL: plural
 PP: past participle
 S: singular
 Second language: L2 [L3, etc.]
 Second Language Acquisition: SLA

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