

The acquisition of discourse marking in L2: from discourse markers to connectivity

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In line with the general theme of the conference, the overall aim of this paper is to reflect on how learner corpora might challenge current approaches to DMs. Specifically, this paper discusses the application of a functional approach to connectivity (Cuenca 2006, 2013) to a corpus of L2 Spanish oral narratives, the corpus SPANS. This corpus consists of a set of unplanned monologic oral narrative texts from native speakers of Spanish and from learners of different L1: Dutch (UAntwerpen), French (UCLouvain), German (USiegen), Italian (UComplutense), and Russian (UBarcelona), at different levels of proficiency (from A2 to C1).

The use of discourse and modal markers is a fundamental and relatively late attainment in the acquisition of first and second languages (Aparici 2010, Ortega, 2015). In addition, an effective use of discourse marking is regarded as a reliable indicator of the quality of texts (Rosado et al., 2021), and as a necessary condition for non-native speakers to sound native-like (Hlavac, 2006). However, the study of the use of DMs by L2 learners is relatively scarce (cf. Borreguero & Thörle 2016). Some studies tend to focus on specific DMs (e.g. the use of *you know* by learners of English) leaving aside elements with similar meanings/functions used by learners. Other studies include the set of expressions that can be considered DMs. Since the criteria to delimit the category of DMs are theory-dependent and sometimes left implicit, these studies are hard to compare, as some types of discourse-organizing expressions are not consistently taken into account (conjunctions, filled pauses, multiword expressions, amongst other).%

In order to address these limitations, this paper adopts a functional approach to second language acquisition (Zyzik 2014): instead of departing from a repertoire of forms considered as discourse markers in L1, we identify a function (connectivity) and then identify the forms that express it. In particular, we follow Cuenca (2006, 2013), who defines connectivity as "a cohesive mechanism established between units of the sentence or text and a connective, which manifests the syntactic and/or semantic relationship between them". This perspective, which includes both sentence and text connectivity, seems more appropriate to analyze oral data since the boundary between sentences in continuous speech is very difficult to establish.

In this paper, we present the main features of Cuenca's analytical proposal (Cuenca et al. 2013) and the challenges we have encountered when applying it to a corpus of learner oral narratives. We discuss four issues: (i) the delimitation of connectives (e.g. are filled pauses and multiword expressions included?); (ii) the combination of connectives (e.g. are they considered an amalgam or a new unit?); (iii) the degree of specificity of functions (e.g. does learner discourse require specific functions?); (iv) and polyfunctionality (how to decide whether a form performs more than one function at a time?).

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