

CHAPTER 7

'So very fast then' Discourse Markers at Left and Right Periphery in Spoken French

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1 Introduction

The central issue raised in this volume concerns the question whether the left and right peripheries¹ (LP and RP) attract specific meanings. Is it the case that the two peripheries differ with respect to the communicative functions they fulfil, and consequently, differ with respect to the linguistic expressions they attract? Among the linguistic expressions that have been described as occurring typically in LP position (actually, initial position) are discourse markers (DMS). Aware of the lack of consensus when talking about discourse markers, I shall define them as any type of linguistic expression whose primary function lies at the discourse level, i.e. relating their host utterance to the discourse situation. As such, discourse markers can play a threefold role contributing to the discourse organization (textual coherence), to the speaker/hearer interaction (interpersonal meanings),² and/or to speaker attitudes (epistemic meaning) (cf. Brinton 2006, Fairbanks 2009, Fischer 2006, Heine 2013, Vincent 2005, among many others). Different grammatical classes may be used as discourse markers: connectives (coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs), sentence adverbials, parentheticals, small clauses...

Traditionally, initial position (or LP, cf. *infra*) has been described as characteristic of discourse markers. They "prototypically introduce the discourse segments they mark" (Hansen, 1997: 156). Schourup (1999: 233) furthermore

1 The notion of periphery, especially of left periphery, has been extensively studied in the framework of generative grammar; see especially Rizzi (1997). This view will not be followed here.

2 This interpersonal function of discourse markers raises the question whether modal particles are part of this encompassing category. Points of view on this specific questions diverge (Degand, Cornillie, Pietrandrea, 2013a), Degand, Cornillie and Pietrandrea (2013b) set out a number of reasons for the potential confusion, an important one being the conception of modal particles either as a grammatical class (cf. German *Abtönungspartikeln*) or a functional class.

observes that this “initiality is rarely considered criterial for DM status” even if “most items considered DMs are at least possible in initial position, and many occur there predominantly” (cf. also Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg 2011). According to Fraser (1999: 938), “[a]lmost all DMs occur in initial position (*though* being an exception), fewer occur in medial position and still fewer in final position.” Some authors tend to consider initial position as a criterial feature of DMs, or to operationalize it to distinguish DM use from other (adverbial) uses (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2004), or as Lenk (1998: 51) puts it “the discourse marker [i.e. structuring conversation on a global level] will usually appear in initial position in the unit; on the other hand, when the item is used as a proposition marker [i.e. carrying propositional meaning] it will not appear initially, but in later (sometimes even in final) position in the utterance.” In Schiffrin’s view (1987: 328) for a linguistic item to be considered as a DM, it “has to be commonly used in initial position of an utterance”, while DMs are for Brinton (1996: 33) “restricted to sentence-initial position”, a view which she downtones in later work (cf. Brinton 2006, 2008). Keller (1979: 233) relates this tendency of DMs to appear initially “to their ‘superordinate’ use to restrict the contextual interpretation of an utterance: in general it will make communicative sense to restrict contexts early before interpretation can run astray.” LP position would thus function as a scope boundary. Watts (1989: 211) distinguishes between left hand (initial) DMs and right hand (final) DMs, based on whether a DM begins or ends a tone unit, but it is not clear that any purely right hand DMs exist.³

In contrast with this focus on DMs in the LP, a growing number of (recent) empirical studies in diverse languages show that RP (utterance-final) position, while apparently less frequent, is not exceptional (in speech) (Barth-Weingarten & Couper-Kuhlen 2002, Degand 2011, Haselow 2011, 2012, Kim & Jahnke 2011, Mulder & Thompson 2008, Strauss & Xiang 2009), some markers being even restricted to RP (cf. Van der Wouden & Foolen 2011 on Dutch).

In this context, the question is raised whether we find differentiated paradigms in these two key positions, or whether the semantic and pragmatic distribution of a given DM remains stable whatever its position in the utterance.

3 I am well aware that this discussion may be heavily biased by the way the cited authors define discourse markers *per se*. Lenk (1998: 51–52) notes, for instance, that initial utterance position is criterial for discourse markers when the latter are defined as items functioning on a *global* level of discourse, concerned with topic organization. For discourse markers functioning on a local level the position is far more variable.

In other words, the question at stake is whether there is something like “peripheral meaning” that would add up to the coded meaning(s) of DMS,⁴ thus leading to peripheral-specific meanings of DMS.

In this chapter I will tackle this question on the basis of the study of two DMS in spoken French: *alors* (‘then, at that time, so’) and *donc* (‘so’), both of which show a similarly high frequency in spontaneous face-to-face conversation⁵ (37.5 and 39.5 per 10,000 words, respectively), and which both occur most often at LP, but also regularly appear at RP (see Section 2 for defining criteria). In a corpus analysis, it was found that *alors* occurs at LP in 85.8% of the cases, and at RP in 12.6%. *Donc* is also found on the two sides of the utterance: 78.5% at LP and 19% at RP. The DM *alors*, most often described as a connective or a coordinating conjunction, sometimes as an interjection, has been the topic of quite some empirical and theoretical work (Degand & Fagard 2011, Franckel 1989, Gerecht 1987, Hansen 1997, Hybertie 1996, Jayez 1988, Le Draoulec & Bras 2007), from which it can be concluded that *alors* is a polysemic discourse marker that can express argumentative (temporal, causal, conditional) as well as metadiscursive (confirmation request, topic resumer, topic introduction, reformulation) relations, with a semantic distribution that varies in speech and in writing, and which tends to vary according to the position it occupies in the utterance. In Degand and Fagard (2011) we have found that *alors* moved over time (from Old French to Present-day French) from medial position to peripheral (initial) position first and only recently to right peripheral position. We showed that this syntactic movement initiated semantic change. Following Traugott (2010) this migration towards peripheral position is likely to be accompanied by a process of (inter-) subjectification, but in the present synchronic study we will only consider the outcome of this supposed process. *Donc* has been described as a causal connective, discourse marker and modal particle, also expressing argumentative (conclusion, consequence) and meta-discursive (reformulation, explicitation, discourse structuring) relations (Bolly &

4 Following Lewis (2011: 420), I prefer the term “coded meaning” rather than “core meaning”, which might evoke priority of a “more central”, or “more salient”, or “prior” meaning over “secondary meanings”, or than “conceptual/procedural meaning”, which forces a position with regard to the conceptual/procedural distinction (I actually believe that both of them are coded in DMS, cf. also Wilson (2011), Bolly & Degand (2013)).

5 The corpus analysis is based on a sample of 50668 words of spontaneous face-to-face conversation (two or more well acquainted participants) extracted from the Valibel database (Dister et al. 2009). All occurrences of *alors* (190) and *donc* (200) were taken into consideration. Position was determined on the basis of the transcribed files; sound files were used in case of doubt (cf. Section 2).

Degand 2009, Ferrari & Rossari 1994, Hansen 1997, Pander Maat & Degand 2001, Rossari 2000, Vlemings 2003, Zenone 1982, 1983).

In line with Beeching and Detges (this volume), I assume that the semantic distribution of these markers varies with their position in the utterance, and that this semantic variation has to be interpreted in paradigmatic terms, i.e. the left and right peripheries favour specific meanings, thus attracting specific linguistic expressions. It follows that we expect the two DMs *alors* and *donc* to express different meanings when they appear in either of these positions. My take on this problem will be mainly synchronic, referring to diachronic aspects occasionally only.

In the following section, I will set the boundaries of the two utterance positions under investigation, LP and RP, and their expected semantics. I will then turn to the semantic distribution of *alors* and *donc* in left peripheral (Section 3) and right peripheral position (Section 4), analyzing older data and complementing these with new corpus results. A recapitulating discussion (Section 5) closes the chapter.

2 Defining the Peripheries and Their Meanings

For convenience I have so far not made a distinction between (utterance/sentence) initial position, left-hand position, first position and left periphery, on the one hand, and (utterance/sentence) final position, right-hand position and right periphery, on the other hand. This does not mean that no distinctions need be made. Some clarification is in order.

In line with my prior work on spoken language (e.g. Degand & Fagard 2011, Degand 2011), I define the left periphery linearly as the most leftward positional slot of the utterance, outside the dependency structure of the verb.⁶ The right periphery lies outside the dependency structure of the verb, at the right of the non-finite verb (if present). Medial position then corresponds to the dependency structure of the clause (predicate-argument structure with adjuncts), which itself has an initial and a final position. The utterance is thus operationalized in clausal terms. S₁ is the (clausal) segment preceding the *alors* or *donc*-segment (S₂). Mostly, in writing, the clause corresponds to an orthographic

6 The grammatical description of spoken French has a longstanding tradition in Dependency Grammar (see especially, Blanche-Benveniste et al. 1990; Berrendonner 2002). This tradition arose out of dissatisfaction with the inadequate way with which typical spoken phenomena had been treated in the traditional grammatical frameworks.

sentence, in speech to a turn construction unit⁷ (Ford & Thompson 1996, Selting 2000). Elements at LP are very often utterance-initial, but not always. Similarly, elements at RP are not always utterance-final. Table 7.1 illustrates this with a number of *alors* and *donc* examples⁸ taken from our corpus sample of spontaneous face-to-face conversation extracted from the Valibel database:

TABLE 7.1 *Illustration of left peripheral and right peripheral positions*

Ex.	Turn initial	Utterance initial	Utterance medial			Utterance final	Turn-final
			Clause initial	Clause medial	Clause final		
1		alors well	on we	avait donné rendez-vous à un à un autre endroit had arranged to meet up somewhere else	aux aux parents with the parents		
2		donc so	je I	voyais encore was still seeing	Cédric Cédric		
3		et donc	i/ on	avait un trou	entre euh / enfin tu vois midi et cinq heures		
		and so	we	had a slot	between er I mean you see noon and five		
4			c' it	est surtout des Hollandais 's mainly the Dutch who come to get	ça that	alors then	
5			dès qu' as soon as	il avait la tune he had the money	la tune the money	quoi donc so to speak then	
6	Oui Yes	et and	qu' what	est-ce tu as fait did you do		alors then	toi toi
LP			clause			RP	

7 In ongoing work, we define an alternative unit for spoken language analysis, the basic discourse unit (Degand & Simon 2009ab), and explore how syntax and prosody can co-define its left periphery (Degand, Simon, Tanguy, Van Damme, in press).

8 Examples were simplified in order to improve readability.

- (1) **alors** on avait donné rendez-vous à un à un autre endroit aux aux parents (...) *alors* ('well/now') we had arranged to meet up with the parents somewhere else
- (2) je je je je jouais encore au badminton **donc** je voyais encore Cédric (...) I was still playing badminton *donc* ('as a consequence') I was still seeing Cédric
- (3) ... et (x) sa copine c'est Vallia / et **donc** i/ on avait un trou entre euh / enfin tu vois midi et cinq heures
and her friend is Vallia/ and *donc* 'so' we had a slot between er/ I mean you see noon and five o'clock
- (4) L1: et c'est étonnant hein c'est surtout des Hollandais qui viennent chercher ça **alors**
L1: and it's astonishing you know (so) it's mainly the Dutch who come to get that *alors* ('then')
- (5) ... il voulait économiser et s'acheter sa maison quoi dès qu'il avait la tune quoi **donc** (silence) ...
he wanted to save up money and buy his house you see as soon as he had the money so to speak *donc* ('then') (silence) ...
- (6) oui et qu'est-ce que tu as fait -| **alors** toi
yes and what did you do -| *alors* ('then') you

Example (7) is a special case, which requires some discussion:⁹

- (7) L1: il roule comme un taré quoi c/ c'est malheureux mais (silence)
L2: c'est mieux ça que de boire mais peut-être qu'il fait les |- deux **donc** euh
L1: ouais il y en a qui -| fument un stick d'autres qui qui roulent comme des tarés quoi mais lui / il / il roule comme un fraisé quoi mais
L1: he drives like a madman you know it's sad but (silence)
L2: it's better than drinking but maybe he does both *donc* ('so') er
L1: yes some smoke joints others drive kind of like loonies but he he drives kind of like a nutcase but
- (7') L2: c'est mieux ça que de boire mais peut-être qu'il fait les |- deux **donc** [c'est peut-être pire]
L2: it's better than drinking but maybe he does both *donc* ('so') [it's maybe worse]

At first sight (7) looks similar to example (4), except that it ends with a hesitation marker so that the utterance seems not finished. Without further context *donc* could be interpreted as the beginning of a new clause that is interrupted

⁹ See Degand (2011) for a similar use of Dutch *dus* ('so').

for one reason or another. In line with this interpretation, the speaker in (7) could be using *donc* as a turn-keeping cue, which does however fail since the addressee takes up the turn. From a prosodic point of view this interpretation is actually not convincing because *donc euh* appears as an integrated construction (no pause between *donc* and *euh*), it is unstressed with a flat tone, and is not lengthened. This intonation contour has been identified by Vincent (1993) as typical for punctuators in spoken French. The second interpretation is that of a specific inferential use that follows from the causal-conclusive meaning of *donc*, possibly reconstructed as in (7'). Thus, in (7) the speaker is purposefully leaving implicit the *donc*-segment, because the addressee can easily reconstruct it. The informative value of the *donc*-segment is not relevant enough to verbalize it. With his affirmative answer the addressee does indeed confirm that he has appropriately inferred the message. Schmale (2008) describes this use as typical for turn transitions. By means of this implicit reasoning the speaker leaves room for the addressee to take the turn; in other words, *donc* functions as a turn transition device, rather than as a turn keeping device. I have systematically considered these uses as belonging to RP. From a diachronic point of view, I would like to argue that such contexts be considered as "bridging contexts" (Heine 2002); where a DM appearing in "interrupted" LP position are gradually interpreted as right peripheral in such inferential contexts—without further intervention from the addressee, and without any need to make the inference explicit. In (8), the speaker eventually—after a silence—feels the need to verbalize the inference—therefore *donc* is counted as left peripheral.

- (8) ben ils avaient deux baraques euh trois bagnoles et il y avait que le père qui travaille quoi **donc** euh / (silence) {ça ne} c'est plus des raisons financières à la base quoi (...)
 well they had two houses uh three cars and only the father had a job you see *donc* ('so') / (silence) it's basically financial reasons you see

Cases such as in (7) have to be distinguished from that in (9), which I have interpreted as interrupted, and therefore not belonging to RP.

- (9) L1: puis je crois qu'il sait bien que si il le raconte à |- Phil Phil me le <L2> ouais ouais -| racontera **donc** (bruit d'un objet qui tombe) (silence) |- ah c'est <L2> tiens -| quoi
 L1: and then I think that he knows that if he tells |- Phil Phil <L2> yes yes -| will tell me *donc* ('so') (noise of a falling object) (silence) |- oh it's <L2> well -| what [what is it

In functional studies, there has been quite some interest in the interaction between the position a linguistic expression occupies in the utterance and the functions it may fulfil in discourse. The general assumption is that syntactic position is meaningful, i.e. it plays a role in the interpretation of the utterance at stake (see e.g., Clift 2001; Crompton 2006; Verstraete 2004; Ward & Birner 1996). From a discursive point of view, the LP is an interesting place to take into consideration because it is the locus where the message—that doesn't yet exist—begins. It's also the place where a change of turn can take place, thus creating negotiation of the discourse structure. Finally, it is the place where the discourse content has to be connected coherently to preceding contents (cf. Virtanen 2004: 80–81). It follows that especially linguistic expressions with informational and/or argumentative functions are to be found in the LP: constructions of topicalization, of topic change, of framing (Fries 1995, Ho-Dac 2007, Virtanen 1992, 2004), of detachment and focalization (De Cat 2007, Lambrecht 1994), but also connectives linking two argumentative propositional contents, and more generally, discourse organization expressions (Diessel 2005, Lenk 1998, Prideaux & Hogan 1993). Focusing on the two discourse markers under scrutiny—*donc* and *alors*—we expect them at LP to primarily express (local) “connective-like” meanings and (global) discourse organization functions.

In turn, the RP is the place where the now existing message can be reflected upon, reformulated or corrected. It is also the place where the speaker can give the turn to the hearer, or address other hearer's needs. We thus expect to find “turn-yielding discourse particle” meanings (Mulder & Thompson 2008), i.e. interpersonal (Brinton 1996), but also modal functions (Hansen 1997), and more general intersubjective meanings (Barth-Weingarten & Couper-Kuhlen 2002; Traugott 2007, 2010; Strauss & Xiang 2009; Verstraete 2004). In sum, when DMs such as *alors* and *donc* do appear in RP position, they are expected to have an interpersonal function, rather than an information-structuring one, serving to confirm shared assumptions, check or express understanding, request confirmation, express deference or they are used for face-saving (Brinton 1996: 37). Now, can we conclude from this that expressions at LP are likely to be subjective, and those at RP intersubjective, as suggested earlier in the introduction to this volume?

In line with Traugott (2003, 2010) I consider subjectivity as the conceptualization of the speaker's beliefs and attitudes, and more generally as an orientation towards the speaker; intersubjectivity is to be understood as the orientation towards the addressee and addressee's face (see also, Brems, Ghesquière & Van de Velde 2012). Following Breban (2010) and Carlier & De Mulder (2010), Degand and Fagard (2012), in their diachronic study of French *car* and *parce*

que ‘for/because’, argue that the intersubjective category should be extended to account for so-called metatextual relations too (such as digressions, reformulations, or metadiscursive comments), because they “materialize the strategic interaction between speaker and hearer and reflect the active role of the speaker to orient and to guide the hearer in his interpretational tasks” (Carlier & De Mulder 2010: 269).

Subjectivity and intersubjectivity are *encoded* in linguistic expressions whose primary semantic and pragmatic meaning is to “index speaker attitude or viewpoint” (Cuyckens, Davidse, Vandelanotte 2010: 4) (subjectivity) and to mark the speaker’s attention to the addressee’s needs and self-image (intersubjectivity). Given their inherent potential to express (meta-) textual, interpersonal, and/or epistemic meanings (cf. *supra*), discourse markers can be considered as typical expressions of (inter-) subjectivity. The hypothesis that will be followed in this chapter is that whenever *alors* or *donc* appear at LP, they will be recruited there primarily for their subjective expression potential (argumentative, epistemic, information-structuring), while their intersubjective potential (metatextual, interpersonal, interactional) will come to the fore at RP.

3 *Alors* and *donc* at LP and RP

As already mentioned in the introduction, both *alors* and *donc* have been thoroughly investigated in the literature. On the basis of an extensive literature review, Degand and Fagard (2011) distinguish three primary meanings expressed by *alors*: temporal, causal (including conditional), and metadiscursive, the latter accounting for all uses where *alors* “does not establish a temporal or argumentative relation, ... can be left out without changing the semantic content, ... can be glossed by other topic shifters, such as *bon* ‘well’, or transition markers, such as *et puis* ‘and then.’” (Degand & Fagard 2011: 36). Focusing here only on their analysis of 100 occurrences in present-day spoken language (spontaneous face-to-face conversation), their results show that *alors* is used mainly to express metadiscursive meanings, causal and conditional relations, and hardly any temporal ones. In initial position, “*alors* either marks topic shifts or smoother topic transitions in metadiscursive function, or marks a causal/conditional relation to the prior segment in connective function.” (Degand & Fagard 2011: 48). At RP, data were too scarce (13 occurrences) to provide any general tendencies. The main observations were “causal and conditional uses in the form of conclusions and/or requests for confirmation” (Degand & Fagard 2011: 48).

For *donc* Bolly and Degand (2009), after a literature review, propose four types of meanings: causal consequence, conclusive recapitulation, reformulation/explicitation, and conceptual structure organization (turn transition and topic structure). The empirical study of 170 occurrences of *donc* (extracted from a sample of spontaneous conversation, broadcasted interviews, political debates) resulted in a fair division between consequential and reformulating uses (approximately one third each), one fifth was recapitulating, and a little more than ten percent had discourse organizing use (Bolly & Degand 2009: 13). The results further show that 160 out of the 170 occurrences studied occur at LP (initial position), where all types of meanings are represented. Degand (2011) presents a study of right peripheral *donc* in contrast with its Dutch counterpart *dus*. Results for *donc* show that a vast majority (74%) is used metadiscursively to recapitulate or reformulate prior information, or to reactivate topical information; the remaining 26% expressed causal-conclusive meanings.

In order to keep things comparable, I performed a new corpus analysis of 50 occurrences of *alors* and *donc* at LP and RP, extracted from the Valibel spontaneous conversation subcorpus. The LP analysis is restricted to the meaning distribution, the level of discourse structure, and the position in turn (Section 3.1), while the RP analysis comprises further variables such as mood, presence of hesitation markers, collocation with other DMs, ... (Section 3.2).

3.1 *Alors and donc at LP in Spontaneous Conversation*

In view of the above mentioned hypothesis that LP tends to attract subjective meanings, and RP intersubjective meanings, I recategorized the *alors* and *donc* meanings as follows; where meanings were determined on the basis of a paraphrase test (Sanders 1997):

- All argumentative relations (causal, conditional, temporal, conclusive) were categorized as subjective because they reflect the speaker's perspective on the way the events are linked together. By using *donc* or *alors* the speaker makes explicit how the situation described in segment 2 (S₂) is meaningfully related to the situation described in segment 1 (S₁); cf. examples (10)–(12). These correspond roughly to Sweetser's (1990) content and epistemic relations.¹⁰ Typical paraphrases are: *as a consequence, it follows from this, the speaker concludes*

10 Note that this definition of subjective relations deviates slightly from the categorizations used in most of my previous empirical work, where non-volitional causal content relations were categorized as objective, volitional causal content relations and epistemic relations as subjective, and speech-act and metatextual relations as intersubjective (or interactional), cf. Degand & Fagard (2012), Evers-Vermeul, Degand, Fagard & Mortier (2011), Pander Maat & Degand (2001), Simon & Degand (2007).

from this, in this case. An exception is made for those conclusive relations that are clearly formulated as a request for confirmation (ex. 13), categorized as inter-subjective since they are clearly addressee oriented. In addition, in those uses *alors* and *donc* may function as turn-transition devices marking “a speaker’s readiness to relinquish a turn” (Schiffrin 1987: 218). The coded argumentative meaning (causal, conclusive) is still present, but it is backgrounded in favour of its more specific interpersonal, intersubjective meaning.

- (10) ...elle ne sait pas se laver comme il faut dans le dos / *alors* (‘du coup, par conséquent’) sa mère vient lui laver son dos ...
 she cannot wash her back as needed / *alors* ‘so’ (‘as a consequence’) her mother comes to wash her back
- (11) [two friends talking about what they did at a students’ festival]
 L1: oui et qu’est-ce que tu as fait -| *alors* (‘dans ce cas’) toi
 L2: |- applaudi <L1> la fête -| et bu //
 L1: yes and what have you done -| *alors* ‘then’ (‘in that case’) you
 L2: |- cheering <L1> partying -| and drinking //
- (12) ...et euh le problème c’est que / on n’a plus rien à manger/ *et donc* (‘par conséquent’) il fallait absolument faire les courses /
 (...) and uh the problem is that / there’s nothing to eat/ and *donc* ‘so’ (‘as a consequence’) we really had to go shopping /
- (13) L1: ils ont toujours habité à Hombourg / je crois // ouais Hombourg donc euh c’est juste à côté
 L2: donc dans la région |- *alors* (‘n’est-ce pas’)
 L1: ouais -|
 L1: they have always lived in Hombourg / I think // yes Hombourg so uh it’s very close
 L2: so in the region |- *alors* (‘then isn’t it’)
 L1: yes -|

- Metadiscursive uses of discourse structuring have been categorized as subjective because they primarily reflect the way the speaker wants to regulate the discourse organization and the discourse flow (cf. Bolly and Degand’s (2009) conceptual structuring). Global structuring includes topic transition, topic shift, topic resuming. It allows introducing a topic “out of the blue” or linking it to a very general communicative situation from the perspective of the speaker, or to previously mentioned information. It can correspond to what Bouacha (1991) calls “attaque du discours” (‘discourse starter’), see e.g. (14), where the speaker starts a new conversational topic with *alors*, while in (15) she reintroduces her topic after having temporarily lost the thread of her thinking. Typical paraphrases include: *to come back to what I said, recall that, by the way, talking about something else*. Again, there is one exception where global discourse structuring

appears to be intersubjectively motivated rather than subjectively, namely when *alors* is used to call out to the addressee, e.g. when waiting for somebody to do something, as in (16).

- (14) voilà papa **alors** ('bon, voyons') pourquoi est-ce que tu voudrais acheter un / agenda électronique
here you are dad *alors* ('well') why would you want to by an / electronic diary
- (15) euh m qu'est-ce que j'allais dire moi / oui **donc** Martin il n'a pas fait beaucoup de sciences euh en humanités
uh m what was I going to say / yes *donc* ('so') Martin didn't take a lot of sciences uh at school
- (16) [discussing the organization of a dinner, while L2 gets ready to enter a new contact in her mobile phone]
L1: (...) **alors** ça y est
L2: c'est quoi le numéro
L1: *alors* ('and', 'so') there we are
L2: what's the number

At the local level of metadiscursive organization of the discourse flow, *alors* and *donc* are used as a means to "keep the conversation going" (see (17), note the frequent use of *et donc* and *et/puis alors*), a kind of "story-telling" use. Although they clearly concern a local level of discourse, they are not argumentative because the propositional content of the segments being linked does not matter, rather a general *in addition* relation applies.

- (17) mais **alors** ce qui était marrant c'est que euh / tout à coup il s'arrêtait / et **alors** euh / assez vite **alors** (xx) se disait maintenant vous vous dirigez vers telle porte // mais **alors** très vite ça devenait tout noir / ...
but *alors* 'then' the funny thing is that uh / suddenly he stopped / and *alors* 'then' uh / fairly quickly *alors* 'then' (xx) said now you take that door // but *alors* 'then' everything went dark / ...
- Metadiscursive uses of reformulation have been categorized as intersubjective because this use is meant to clarify the speaker's ideas with regard to the addressee. Whenever the risk exists that the speaker's utterance might be unclear or ill-formed he comes back to it and tries to make it clearer to improve the addressee's comprehension (Cuenca & Bach 2007; Gülich & Kotschi 1983). Ciabbarri (2013: 124) distinguishes "speaker oriented" from "addressee oriented" reformulation. The former has to do with planning time restrictions leading the speaker to "reformulate for himself, in order to take some time to clear his mind and plan the next bit of his speech" while the latter accounts for the use of

reformulation markers assuming “a ‘didactic’ function that is instructing the reader in how to interpret the writer’s thoughts and warning the reader of a possible difficulty in the text”. She finds that in (Italian) written language reformulation is nearly exclusively addressee oriented, whereas the two types are represented in spoken language. Interesting as it is, I have not followed this distinction here for lack of a way to operationalise it and have categorized all reformulative uses as intersubjective (18).

- (18) quand -| tu as des gens quand tu as des gens qui font vraiment des erreurs alors que ça fait euh six mois que je répète la même chose enfin j’exagère un peu mais / presque // les autres savent que c’est un truc qu’ils doivent QUI EST CONNU QUOI qui est censé être connu *donc* euh

when -| you have people when you have people who really make mistakes while it’s been uh like six months that I repeat the same thing well I exaggerate a little but / nearly // the others know that it is a thing that they have to that is know you see that is supposed to be known *donc* uh

For the present analysis, I randomly extracted 50 occurrences of *alors* and *donc* from the above mentioned spontaneous conversation subcorpus. Segments that were incomplete and could not easily be reconstructed were left out of the analysis (cf. example (19) where L2 takes over from L1 without completing her argumentation).

- (19) L1: ben à ce moment-là |- tu étais de toute façon L2 aussi / -| oui mais ils étaient c’était lourd *alors* autant euh / et puis je sortais donc je préférais rentrer là euh / j’avais une drôle de vie quoi tu vois c’était vraiment |- bizarre

L1: well at that time |- you were in any case L2 also / -| yes but they were it was heavy *alors* (‘so’) rather uh / and then I was going out...

The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 7.2.

TABLE 7.2 *Analysis of alors at left periphery*

	Subjective		Intersubjective Metadisc.	Ambiguous Metadisc.	Total
	Argument.	Metadisc.			
Turn-initial	2	10	4	3	19
Turn-internal	13	18	0	0	31
Total	43		4	3	50

From the 50 occurrences analyzed in context, 86% are subjective, in that they show a speaker-oriented use, 8% are intersubjective, because they are clearly addressee-oriented, and 6% have been categorized as ambiguous in this respect. Actually, these latter cases are subjective in that they help the speaker resume a previously started topic (global discourse organization), but also intersubjective because *alors* marks an aggressive turn transition. In (20) L2 interrupts L1 to pursue her own prior topic, and L1's topic is abandoned.

- (20) L1: enfin il valait mieux venir pour rien que
 L2: et *alors* // le mieux le gars / qui nous prêtait l'endroit / a un grand tracteur avec une énorme remorque
 L1: äie äie äie äie äie
 L1: anyway it was better to come for nothing than
 L2: and *alors* 'then' even better the guy who rented the location to us / had a big tractor with an enormous trailer
 L1: äie äie äie äie äie [oh dear]

The other intersubjective cases consist of calls to the addressee, as in (16) above, or (21) where the speaker is interrupted by the addressee, without however taking the turn; after the digression the speaker continues his turn.

- (20) L1: ah oui -| ah c'est acheté et tout maintenant |- hein
 L2: c'est -| acheté ? |- et *alors* / c'est qui ?
 L1: ah oui c'est -| un des / des propriétaires d'On/ d'Onderwin / un des fils je pense
 L1: oh yes -| oh it's been bought and everything |- you see
 L2: it's -| been bought ? |- and *alors* 'so' / who is it?
 L1: oh yes it's -| one of the owners of Onderwin / one of the sons I think

Note that 36% (18/50) of LP *alors* are found turn-initially, among these we find all the intersubjective uses and all the ones I categorized as ambiguous. It is important to observe that occurring turn-initially does not automatically lead to intersubjective use, since 12 occurrences are turn-initial while subjective in use.

As for the 43 subjective cases (86% of the sample), they comprise all of the 15 argumentative uses of the data sample (mainly causal and conditional meanings), and mostly occur turn-internally. The metadiscursive uses at turn-initial position (10 occ.) mainly serve to introduce or resume a topic; when they occur turn-internally (18 occ.) they either serve to keep the thread of discourse going (a kind of narration continuation relation), or to resume a topic after a digression.

TABLE 7.3 *Analysis of donc at left periphery*

	Subjective		Intersubjective	Total
	Argument.	Metadisc.	Metadisc.	
Turn-initial	4	2	3	19
Turn-internal	24	5	12	41
Total	35		15	50

The analysis of *donc* at LP along the same lines provides a slightly diverging picture. It is summarized in Table 7.3.

First, subjective uses are also higher than intersubjective ones (70% vs. 30%). Again, all intersubjective uses serve to express metadiscursive meanings but they are of a different type than for *alors*: 7/15 are reformulating/explicitating (22); 8/15 are recapitulating (23). Reformulative *donc* introduces the segment that rewords, clarifies, or makes the first segment more explicit for the addressee. It is a local discourse relation between S1 and S2. Recapitulating *donc* marks a global relation between S2 and a number of prior propositions. The *donc* segment forms a kind of conclusive summary of prior information. I have categorized these uses as intersubjective because they appear to have a clarifying role for the addressee. This preoccupation with the addressee is also apparent from the many *tu vois* occurrences, very often accompanying this type of relation (23). At the same time, the recapitulating relation has a discourse structuring function indicating the closure of a topic.

- (22) (...) tu sais moi dans / euh // je m'occupe de / de revalidations lourdes et y compris de / de tout ce qui est réinsertion socio-professionnelle / des traumatisés crâniens **donc** avec / altérations cognitives troubles tu sais euh mnésiques attentionnels enfin brindezingues quoi hein (...)
you know I in / uh // I'm in charge of / of heavy revalidation and including / everything which is socio-professional reinsertion / traumatic brain injuries *donc* 'that is' with / cognitive alterations disorders you know of memory attention in short completely nuts you see
- (23) [FFL teacher about how to teach the "participe passé" to Chinese students]
L1: l'accord du participe passé par exemple c'est vrai que c'est pas super évident mais / au bout de au bout de mille fois tu tu la connais (L2: rire) quoi mais ce que j'ai fait j'explique souvent euh / carrément au tableau TU VOIS donc / en général je leur explique une fois / avant de |- d'apprendre la <L2> m -| de leur apprendre

la matière / puis après je leur donne une feuille TU VOIS avec des exercices et cetera euh / ou ou une séquence TU VOIS là |- sur le le <L2> oui oui -| le point de grammaire *donc* là vraiment c'est officiel TU VOIS alors qu'avant c'était un petit peu |- euh <L2> mm -| / une approche comme ça

L1: past participle agreement for instance true it's not really easy but / after after a thousand times you you can do it (L2: laughing) can't you but what I do I often explain uh / on the blackboard you see / in general I explain it to them once / before |- teaching the <L2> m -| teaching the subject / then after that I give them a piece of paper you see with exercices et cetera uh / or or a sequence you see |- on the the <L2> yes yes -| point of grammar *donc* 'so, in sum' then it's really official you see while before it was a little |- uh <L2> mm -| / an approach of this and that

The subjective uses (70%) are mainly argumentative (28/35), expressing mostly local consequential and conclusive relations; the remaining metadiscursive uses (7/35) express global relations with regard to topic introduction and topic resuming, with one case of (local) topic continuation (*et donc*). The results for subjective LP are thus strikingly unlike those for *alors*. Furthermore few LP *donc* cases occur at the beginning of a turn (7/50) where all possible meanings of *donc* are present, thus not favouring one specific meaning in this position. Different from *alors*, LP *donc* cannot be considered as a turn-taking device, and only rarely as a global discourse structuring cue.

With some nuances, the first part of my working hypothesis seems to be confirmed. LP tends to favour subjective meanings, which are for both *alors* and *donc* argumentative in nature (local "connective-like" relation) or related to topical discourse organization from the speaker's perspective. The intersubjective uses concern the use of *alors* as a turn-taking device, either by interrupting and overtaking the other's turn to pursue one's own discourse line, or by introducing a digression in the form of a request for further information. In semantic terms this use departs strongly from *alors*' argumentative meaning (temporal, causal, conditional). Strikingly, it is not present for *donc* at all, where the intersubjective meanings are more closely related to the argumentative conclusive meaning of *donc*, namely when *donc* introduces recapitulating, explicating or reformulating information, taking into account the addressee's needs for clear information, which he/she is invited to co-conclude with the speaker.

4 *Alors and donc* at RP

In the subcorpus of spontaneous face-to-face conversation between acquaintances in the Valibel database, *alors* was found at RP in 12.6% of the occurrences (24/190) and *donc* in 19% (38/200). In order to reach 50 cases of both of the DMs at RP, I supplemented the spontaneous conversation data with RP occurrences extracted from guided conversations between acquaintances, which features talk mostly on sociolinguistic matters (about where and how people were raised, with which language backgrounds, what they think about regional accents, etc.).

Again, my basis of analysis was the transcribed context (minimally 5 lines of context before and after the segment under analysis), having recourse to the sound files only in case of doubt. The following variables were coded: position in turn (turn-ending or not), presence of hesitation marker, collocation with other discourse markers, mood (declarative, interrogative, other), type of relation (argumentative/metadiscursive), semantics of relation (conclusive, consequential, temporal, topic introduction, topic resuming, reformulation), level of discourse structure (local, global).

4.1 *Alors* at RP

With regard to turn organization, RP *alors* is predominantly turn final (84%), it is never followed by a hesitation marker. The intersubjective/subjective divide of RP *alors* is 62% vs. 38%; a large majority of 74% is argumentative (mainly conclusive, a few conditional, and even less temporal relations), and the remaining 26% of metadiscursive uses cover continuation of topic (8/13) and resuming a topic (5/13). These results are summarized in Table 7.4.

The intersubjective uses are mainly argumentative conclusions formulated as a request for confirmation (23 out of 32 intersubjective uses). The speaker

TABLE 7.4 *Analysis of alors at right periphery*

	Subjective		Intersubjective		Total
	Argument.	Metadisc.	Argument.	Metadisc.	
Turn-initial	11	3	20	8	42
Turn-internal	3	1	3	1	8
Total	18		32		50

makes the conclusion to be drawn explicit and addresses it to the hearer requesting confirmation that this conclusion is correct, as in examples (24) and (25). The request for confirmation can take the explicit form of an interrogative (syntax and/or prosody) (9 occurrences), but is mostly in declarative form.

- (24) L1: donc il n'a jamais eu d'enseignement **alors**
 L2: ben si / ...
 L1: so he never had any teaching *alors* 'then'
 L2: well he did / ...
- (25) L1: **alors** j'avais trois ans depuis trois ans / et j'en vais avoir quatre-vingt-deux
 L2: ça fait quatre-vingts ans que tu habites ici **alors** ?
 L1: oui oui depuis quatre-vingts l- ans que j'habite ici
 L1: alors I was 3 years since 3 years / and I will be 82
 L2: You've been living here for 80 years *alors* 'then' ?
 L1: yes yes I have been living here for 80 years

The remaining intersubjective uses are metadiscursive, either invitations to the addressee to pursue the conversation (6/31) or to resume the topic (2/31). Topic continuation was defined at the local level of discourse between two consequent segments (26), while topic resuming was defined at the global level of discourse. Remember that we categorized such uses as subjective in Section 3.1. However, in many of such instances at RP, they are clearly intersubjective, because they invite the addressee to pursue the topic or to take it up again. These uses also systematically occur at the end of a turn thus functioning strongly as a turn transition device.

- (26) L1: j'ai été le voir en conférence
 L2: hein
 L1: la semaine d'avant
 L2: et **alors**
 L1: bien
 L2: oui ?
 L1: oui oui oui / mais il a / on voit qu'il a un discours tout fait quoi tu vois
 L1: I went to listen to his talk
 L2: what
 L1: the week before
 L2: and *alors* 'and' ?
 L1: good
 L2: yes ?
 L1: yes yes yes / but he has / one can see that he has a well prepared talk you see

A number of such metadiscursive uses of topic continuation and topic resuming at RP were nonetheless categorized as subjective (5 occurrences), because this call on the addressee is absent, rather *alors* seems to express the same meanings as at LP, namely taking the speaker's perspective. The argumentative subjective uses resemble the uses at LP, *alors* expressing a causal, conclusive or temporal relation, with the difference that *alors* closes the segment rather than introducing it (27). In my opinion, the examples (27) and (27') are semantically similar, *alors* making explicit the consequential relation between *taking elocution* and *not counting*.

- (27) et Jonathan il devrait sortir aussi il fait de la diction ça compte pas **alors**
and Jonathan he should leave the room too he took elocution that doesn't count
alors
- (27') et Jonathan il devrait sortir aussi il fait de la diction **alors** ça compte pas
and Jonathan he should leave the room too he took elocution *alors* 'so' that
doesn't count

4.2 **Donc at RP**

RP *donc* is also mainly turn final (70%), and is immediately followed by a hesitation marker in 58% of the cases turning *donc euh* into a typical (turn) final pattern which appears to express a specific meaning, namely that of a conclusive relation that the addressee is invited to infer (cf. example (7) commented on above, or (28)). This use accounts for 19 out of the 26 turn final *donc euh* collocations. As argued in Section 3.1, I have categorized these cases as intersubjective.

- (28) mais pour mes / attends c'était pour mes trente ans / on devait partir à // à Venise
et puis on a acheté la maison c'est tombé à l'eau / et pour les trente-cinq ans /
j'avais dit à Jean-Louis je t'offre un voyage à Rome et puis euh j'ai été enceinte
donc euh (xx) hé hé
but for my / wait it was for my 30th birthday / we wanted to go to // to Venice and
then we bought the house it was cancelled / and for my 35th birthday / I had told
Jean-Louis I'll pay you a trip to Rome and then euh I got pregnant *donc* euh hé hé

Overall, *donc* at RP is intersubjective in use in 78% (39/50) of the cases. Next to the conclusive inferences (21/39), we find mainly reformulative and recapitulating uses (as at LP). The 22% subjective cases cover mainly causal-conclusive relations (7/11) and metadiscursive uses of topic resuming and

TABLE 7.5 *Analysis of donc at right periphery*

	Subjective		Intersubjective		Total
	Argument.	Metadisc.	Argument.	Metadisc.	
Turn-initial	4	2	19	10	35
Turn-internal	3	2	2	8	15
Total	11		39		50

topic continuation. All in all, the argumentative uses (conclusive and consequential) account for a slight majority of 56% (28/50) of *donc* usage at RP, with a fair number of metadiscursive uses of reformulation (9/22), recapitulation (8/22), and topic continuation or resuming (4/22). These results are summarized in Table 7.5.

Alors and *donc* at RP behave similarly in a number of respects: there are more intersubjective uses than subjective uses, thus confirming the hypothesis that RP tends to attract intersubjective meanings. This tendency is stronger for *donc* (78% intersubjective) than for *alors* (62% intersubjective). The two markers are also predominantly turn final, but while *donc* collocates strongly with the hesitation marker *eu*, *alors* at RP never does so. The metadiscursive uses are more frequent for *donc* than for *alors* but they appear to be of a different type: *alors* is mainly topic organizing, while *donc* is reformulating and recapitulating. The argumentative uses are also different in the way they are put to use at RP. While the two markers express mainly causal-conclusive relations, *alors* helps to formulate an (intersubjective) request for confirmation, and *donc* invites the addressee to infer the conclusion by means of a *donc eu* collocate.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The comparison of *alors* and *donc* at both LP and RP reveals similarities and divergences. Are these similarities the result of shared “peripheral meaning” or of shared “coded meaning”? In other words, do *alors* and *donc* behave similarly at LP because they are at LP, which would put their “subjective side” to the fore; or do they behave similarly because they simply share a range of (argumentative) coded meanings (cf. Hansen 1997 on the substitution possibilities – and limits – between the two markers). The same can be said for RP.

TABLE 7.6 *Semantic distribution of alors at LP and RP*

	LP	RP
Arg: Causal-conclusive	10	29
Arg: Conditional	4	5
Arg: Temporal	1	3
Meta: Topic continuation	10	8
Meta: Topic intro & resume	24	5
Meta: Interjection	1	0
Total	50	50

The answer to this question should come from a comparison of *alors* at LP and RP, on the one hand, and *donc* at LP and RP, on the other. The results given so far show that *alors* can express similar meanings at both sides of the utterance, but it does so in very different proportions. Table 7.6 gives an overview.

At LP, *alors* mainly expresses metadiscursive relations expressing the speaker's willingness to help the discourse forward (introducing, resuming and continuing topics); strikingly at LP *alors* expresses argumentative relations in a much lower proportion. In contrast, at RP, these argumentative (causal-conclusive) relations find their full expression in addressee-oriented confirmations for request, the metadiscursive relations of topic organization being less frequent. These results confirm my prior conclusions that *alors* specializes its meanings according to its position in the utterance favouring speaker-oriented meanings at LP and addressee-oriented meanings at RP. In addition the high proportion of RP *alors* that also occurs turn-finally (84%) induces its interpretation as a turn transition device, thus reinforcing its intersubjective function.

A similar comparison for *donc* at the two ends of the utterance gives a different picture (Table 7.7).

At first sight, *donc* expresses the same kind of relations at LP and RP: a slight majority of causal-conclusive relations, and a range of different metadiscursive relations of recapitulation, reformulation, and a few topic organizing relations. There is thus no meaning specialization for *donc* according to its position in the utterance. However, the way these meanings are formulated at the two ends differs. Argumentative relations are verbalized mainly in the form of an invitation to the addressee to infer the conclusion left implicit by the speaker. This is why these uses were categorized as intersubjective at RP, but subjective

TABLE 7.7 *Semantic distribution of donc at LP and RP*

	LP	RP
Arg: Causal-conclusive	25	28
Meta: Topic continuation	1	1
Meta: Recapitulation	8	8
Meta: Reformulation	7	9
Meta: Topic intro & resume	6	3
Modal	0	1
Total	50	50

at LP, where the speaker's conclusion is expressed explicitly. Recapitulating and reformulating meanings do not specialize according to their position in the utterance. They are meant to facilitate the addressee's understanding and have been categorized as intersubjective on both peripheries. The fact, however, that these metadiscursive cases occur mainly turn-finally when at RP, strengthens the intersubjective value of RP. In sum, *donc* does not offer strong evidence that its meanings vary according to its position in the utterance, weakening our hypothesis for specialized LP and RP meaning. Nevertheless, a number of formal aspects accompanying the use of *donc* at utterance periphery can be interpreted as tendencies for intersubjective meaning at RP, namely the conclusive invited inferences, and the high proportion of RP *donc* at turn-final position.

In conclusion, on the basis of the results of the data analysis of 50 occurrences of *alors* and *donc* at left and right utterance periphery, I would like to argue that the hypothesis that left periphery attracts subjective meanings and right periphery intersubjective ones is confirmed. For *alors*, the comparison of its uses at both ends of the utterance gives strong support to it, less so for *donc*. However, the fact that *alors* and *donc* share a number of meanings that are specialized for LP (subjective argumentative and metadiscursive relations), on the one hand, and for RP (intersubjective argumentative and metadiscursive relations), on the other, suggests that such tendencies are compatible with any discourse marker, or maybe even any linguistic expression, occurring in these positions. One could object that my twofold categorization of metadiscursive relations is biased towards my hypothesis. Most of the metadiscursive uses at LP appear to be subjective in nature, and most at RP appear to be intersubjective. A point for discussion is the fact that I have categorized

some metadiscursive uses as intersubjective (addressee-oriented), others as subjective (speaker-oriented). If I had treated all metadiscursive uses as intersubjective, the results would fit the working hypothesis a lot less. However, metadiscursive meanings are not systematically addressee-oriented, speaker-oriented meanings do also form part of the metadiscursive means of expression. According to Aguilar (2008:17) metadiscourse is “a linguistic, rhetorical and pragmatic resource to refer to and reflect the relationship between the content of the message, the sender and the receiver.” Specific studies of metadiscourse in spoken language, e.g. Mauranen (2001) distinguish monologic, dialogic and interactive aspects, thus confirming both speaker-oriented and addressee-oriented expressions.

Further systematic comparison of linguistic expressions found at the two peripheries, as well as investigation of expressions occurring exclusively at one or the other end should bring us further evidence in this direction. Diachronic analyses will furthermore support the idea that this meaning specialization results from (inter)subjectification processes, where syntagmatic position drives meaning change (cf. Degand & Fagard, 2011).

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Corpora Used

Valibel/Moca. *Base de données du français oral de Belgique* <<http://www.uclouvain.be/260466.html>>